WINTER RULES

A Commonplace Book

George Gardner Herrick

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It was called, as it were, a Grove of commonplaces and bons mots, from the diverse substance and quality of its contents. For just as we are popularly accustomed to call a boundless cluster of trees growing hither and thither a Grove, so too the ancients used to refer to as Groves those of their great books in which little writings of various sorts were haphazardly collected.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626)
(Translated from the Latin)

For

Nannette

CONTENTS

Foreword by Norman Sherry	ix
Preface	xi
Prologue	1
Habits of Painters	13
Hymns	27
Miscellany	39
Individuality	63
Games	87
Picnics	101
Talk	113
Textual Considerations	127
One For The Road	147
Bibliographical Notes	151
Index	155

Foreword

No doubt Shakespeare kept a commonplace book (many Elizabethans did) and perhaps his play Hamlet shows evidence of this: 'My tables - meet it is I set it down/That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain!' And who was it that suggested that the phrase which stands at the beginning of his famous soliloquy - 'To be or not to be: that is the question' - was probably heard by Shakespeare in a London street, a trifle uttered by a passerby, picked up by the bard, recorded in his commonplace book, expressed into 'Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer/The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune/Or to take arms against a sea of troubles/And by opposing end them?

Well we do not keep alive the habit of commonplace books so wonderfully characteristic of an earlier age - to our detriment! We rely on those choice men who take on the task for us and publish their commonplace book collections. In our time, one is aware of the singular work of Rupert Hart-Davis, John Julius Norwich and George Gardner Herrick, now presenting for our delectation his third collection, Winter Rules, sequel to Michelangelo's Snowman (1985) and The Chill of Marble (1989).

Each commonplace book is different. Hart-Davis' is poetical, Norwich's (in his famous Christmas Crackers) always funny, Herrick's playful and historical. Here lies the fascination of commonplace books - they all differ and differ because, more than diaries and letters, commonplace books provide you with a general reflection of the collector. The reflection is not detailed and specific as in biography but arises from the civilized nature of the collection. Indeed, commonplace books epitomize the civilized intellect.

What do we see of Herrick (even if we are not fortunate to know him personally): he is the collector of the unusual, he is intrigued by the passing show and enjoys transmitting his discoveries to the reader but without vulgar fanfare. Quoting Lichtenberg early in his collection, that hunchback German professor: 'Everyone should study at least enough philosophy and belles lettres to make his sexual experience more delectable.' surely only Herrick would have noticed this - he raids libraries - his own included - to discover passages 'as delicate as butterfly and as strong as catgut', as Virginia Woolf once said of Proust.

We can find a similar nature in his ancestor Robert Herrick, the Elizabethan cleric and poet - whose reputation reached its height with the

publication of Hesperides (containing 1,400 poems!) in 1648. Robert Herrick's love songs to imaginary mistresses, the sense of his being a religious pagan, civilized in retirement polishing his poetry as George Herrick collects, selects, discards and accepts quotations, with the same hedonistic air and dispassionate manner in his retirement.

You might think then that George Herrick would have quoted a line from Robert Herrick perhaps from 'On Julia's Legs': 'Fain would I kiss my Julia's dainty leg/Which is as white and hairless as an egg.' There stands the humor of the living Herrick.

May he give us a dozen more commonplace books, so delightful, so elegant, so self-controlled, intriguing, fair-spoken, very fine - yes and as strong as catgut.

Norman Sherry
Professor of English
Trinity College
San Antonio, Texas

Preface

A commonplace book is a register of facts, observations and extracts from various sources so arranged as to be of easy reference and usually furnished with some kind of index to facilitate use. Commonplace books can serve as personal anthologies, compendia of useful information, collections on special subjects or literary quarries for writers.

They have been described by their compilers as storehouses, savings banks, salt pits, honey combs, golden gates and other images suggestive of great value. Some Latin terms for them were adversaria, florilegia, sententiae and sylvae. There have been commonplace books on all manner of subjects, on legal precedents, medicinal remedies, songs and ballads, sermons, anecdotes and even on gallant sayings for use with ladies. The more interesting ones cover a wide range of history and literature giving the owner a sense of life as literature and an index of literary references to serve as a guide for moral action, a reminder of past enthusiasms or just plain amusement.

Commonplace books begin as a need to remember what one has read or seen or heard. For many years I have been saving bits from my reading or notes from my journals in commonplace books or files. The longer one goes on, the more valuable they become. They serve as a trigger to the memory of one's reading, a guide to one's library, a source of ready material for almost any occasion. And they can be brought along on a trip where reference to one's private storehouse of information may be useful. Once the eye is focussed and the ear attuned, there is no telling where the next discovery may be found. Chance favors the prepared mind. Overheard remarks, exhibition catalogues, bulletin board announcements, restaurant menus and many other things around us can yield a gem which combines with something else to yield a small truth or adorn a growing collection.

There are curiously few references to commonplace books in literature. Where else can the compiler refer to his private book except perhaps in another journal? William Byrd established forever the relative priority of the commonplace book in his diary entry of 9 September 1711:

"I rose about 8 o'clock, having first rogered my wife. I read a little in my commonplace book. I said my prayers and drank chocolate for breakfast."

Here, then, is a sequel to my first two collections, Michelangelo's Snowman (1985) and The Chill of Marble (1989). In one way or another these pieces have entertained me, added something new to a treasury of material on a given theme or suggested a new avenue for collection. A commonplace book is invitational. It offers readers something for their entertainment. The title phrase of this book, "winter rules", is best known as the golfing convention

which permits a player to improve his lie on the fairway, but it has also been used over the years as an invitation to houseguests to help themselves to anything they need or want.

George Gardner Herrick

Prologue

Probable arguments are like little starres, every one of which will be useless as to our conduct and enlightening, but when they are tyed together by order and vicinity, by the finger of God and the hand of an Angel, they make a Constellation, and are not onely powerful in their influence, but like a bright Angel to guide and enlighten our way.

Jeremy Taylor
Ductor Dubitantium (1660)

From a manuscript 17th century commonplace book :

Philip, King of Macedon caused one of his pages to wake him every morning, and call to him, "Sir, Remember you are a man."

Philip The King of Macedon
Dayly was rou'zed and call'd upon,
By a shrill page, whose Bonjour ran,
Remember Sir, you are a man.

Thomas Grocer
A Banquet of Sweatmeats (1657)

Compare with the matutinal greeting of the valet of the Duc de Saint-Simon's nephew:

Levez-vous, Monsieur le Comte, vous avez de grandes choses à faire aujourd'hui.

Geoffrey Madan's Notebooks (1981)

Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742-1799), the hunchbacked German professor and aphorist, insisted that:

> Everyone should study at least enough philosophy and belles lettres to make his sexual experience more delectable.

Ranked by some above La Rochefoucauld as a moralist, Lichtenberg is less well known in the world of English letters. The aphorisms for which he is celebrated were culled, after his death, from a series of commonplace books he called (in English) "waste books".

Great undertakings often start inauspiciously. Joseph Addison's Grand Tour of Europe began with a misplaced step that almost drowned him in the English Channel at Calais. He went on to write one of the key travel books of the 18th century, Remarks on Several Parts of Italy, in 1705. Here he writes the dramatist, William Congreve, about the incident.

Dear Sir
Paris, August 1699

Since I had the happiness to see you last I have encountered as many misfortunes as a Knight-Errant. I had a fall into the water at Callice and since that several Bruises upon the Land, lame post-horses by Day and hard Beds at night with many other dismal adventures. *Quamquam animus meminisse horret luctuque refugit.* My arrival at Paris was at first no less uncomfortable where I could not see a face nor hear a Word that I ever met with before: so that my most agreeable companions have bin statues and Pictures wch are many of 'em very extraordinary but what particularly recommends 'em to me is that they dont Speak French and they have a very good quality, rarely to be met with in this Country of not being too Talkative.

In the preface to his multi-volume history, Science and Civilization in China, Joseph Needham lays down some imposing criteria for a scholar who would envisage undertaking such a Herculean task. Thus:

> (1) He should have had a scientific training and have been engaged for a number of years upon useful and productive scientific research; (2) he should be acquainted broadly with the history of science in Europe, and should have carried out some original work in one or other aspect of it; and (3) he should have had interest in, and some acquaintance with, the social and economic background of science and technology in the successive stages of European history. But, on the other hand, (4) he should have had personal experience of Chinese life, and enjoyed the opportunity of extensive travels in that country, *preferably neither as a missionary, a regular diplomat, nor a merchant;* (5) he should have a knowledge of the Chinese language, if not adequate for very rapid reading, at least sufficient to permit the consultation of original sources and indispensable works of reference; and (6) he should have had the good fortune of guidance from a wide range of Chinese scientists and scholars. That these strangely assorted circumstances should all have fallen to my lot is my basic defence against the criticisms, which I shall certainly deserve, from those who are, in one field or another which this book will touch, past masters.
>
> *My italics in the text.*

But orientals do things with a lighter touch. Here, Imai Shokusajin Bumpo (1768-1829), the Japanese Edo poet, writes a stylish preface to Volume VI of Katsushika Hokusai's Manga, or Sketchbooks:

Extravagant it may indeed sound to speak of "the horse in a picture coming out every evening to eat rice-cakes" or "the deer in a painting coming out every evening to eat rice-dumplings"! And, as a matter of fact, to achieve that degree of skill in verisimilitude is quite beyond the comprehension of the amateur painter. That kind of "dumpling" is really a job for the professional confectioner!

Here now we have the paintings of the master Taito, replete in grace, vitality, technique. His portrayals of reality are truly the equal of the "horse eating dumplings"; his detailed depiction of all things under the sun would make even Wang Wei and Li Ssu-hsun [early T'ang masters] scratch their dumpling heads.

We may add that the success of these *Manga* among the public has proved a veritable "cornucopia-dumpling" for the publisher too! And when these dumplings are brought forth from the warm oven, the three in a platter do not make just one group, but the three are doubled and here we have Volume Six, to which I've been asked to add a preface. Thus solicited, I'm really in a pudding, but have written away just as the morsels fell from my mouth.

Recorded by the dumpling-fancier, saké-hater, and poor drinker, Shokusajin, in the Bumpo Hall.

On the necessity of keeping a literary journal.

"I see what you think of me,"said he gravely-"I shall make but a poor figure in your journal to-morrow."

"My journal!"

"Yes, I know exactly what you will say: Friday, went to the Lower Rooms; wore my sprigged muslin robe with blue trimmings - plain black shoes - appeared to much advantage; but was strangely harassed by a queer, half-witted man, who would make me dance with him, and distressed me by his nonsense."

"Indeed I shall say no such thing."

"Shall I tell you what you ought to say?"

"If you please."

"I danced with a very agreeable young man, introduced by Mr. King; had a great deal of conversation with him - seems a most extraordinary genius - hope I may know more of him. *That*, madam, is what *I* wish you to say."

"But, perhaps, I keep no journal."

"Perhaps you are not sitting in this room, and I am not sitting by you. These are points in which a doubt is equally possible. Not keep a journal! How are your absent cousins to understand the tenour of your life in Bath without one? How are the civilities and compliments of every day to be related, as they ought to be, unless noted down every evening in a journal?

Jane Austen
Northanger Abbey (1818)

Catherine Morland, the heroine (and indeed one of my heroines because she is one of the best fictional tomboys) is exchanging literary repartee with her dancing partner in Bath.

It was King Alfred perhaps who kept the first commonplace book in England. But whether or not, as legend would have it, the vocation to read and translate Latin and keep the book occurred all on one and the same day in 887 may be doubted.

> I wrote what he bade me; and on that same day, I wrote therein, as I had anticipated, no less than three other quotations which pleased him; and from that time we daily talked together, and found out other quotations which pleased him, so that the sheet became full, and deservedly so; according as it is written,'The just man builds upon a moderate foundation, and by degrees passes to greater things.' Thus, like a most productive bee, he flew here and there, asking questions as he went, until he had eagerly and unceasingly collected many various flowers of divine Scriptures, with Now when the first quotation was copied, he was eager at once to read, and to interpret in Saxon, and then to teach others;...and he continued to learn the flowers collected by certain masters, and to reduce them into the form of one book, as he was then able, although mixed one with another, until it became almost as large as a psalter. This book he called ENCHIRIDION or MANUAL, because he carefully kept it at hand day and night and found, as he told me, no small consolation therein.
>
> Asser, Bishop of Sherborne
> Life of Alfred (ca. 900)

At about the same time Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople (810-893?), was compiling his Myriobiblion or Bibliotecha, a history of literature, literary autobiography, anthology, annotated bibliography, library catalogue and research notebook.

Literary correspondences, not to mention journals and diaries, sometimes begin on a hesitant note. Here Thomas Percy, Bishop of Dromore (1729-1811), sets sail with his friend, Thomas Apperly.

December 9, 1754.

I recd the favour of your letter, and very gladly enter on a Correspondence with you, on whatever Terms you please, - Nor ought a Scarcity of what is call'd *News* be any Objections to our frequent writing, since a judicious Peice of Criticism, an Elegant Composition, or an Occasional Reflection on the Workings of the Human Mind, as well as Remarks on the different Characters & Manners of our fellow-creatures; must be infinitely preferable, both with regard to Pleasure and Profit: - Such I shall expect from your Pen, & I will promise that my limping Muse shall hobble after you as fast as she is able.

Consider the late Freya Stark's letter of 7 June 1935 to Venetia Buddicom in which she notes this Persian proverb:

> It is good to know the Truth and to talk about it, but it is better to know the Truth and to talk about palm trees.

Habits of Painters

A picture is something that requires as much knavery, trickery, and deceit as the perpetration of a crime. Paint falsely, and then add the accent of nature. The artist does not draw what he sees, but what he must make others see.

Edgar Degas (1834-1917)

Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) manifested his talent at an early age.

Other stories of his early works are not wanting. On one occasion he was concealed among some bushes in his father's garden, making a sketch of an old fantastic tree, when he observed a man looking most wistfully over the wall at some pears, which were hanging ripe and tempting. The slanting light of the sun happened to throw the eager face into a highly picturesque mixture of light and shade, and Tom immediately sketched his likeness, much to the poor man's consternation afterwards, and much to the amusement of his father, when he taxed the peasant with the intention of plundering his garden, and showed him how he looked.

Allan Cunningham
Lives of Eminent British Painters (1829-1833)

The earliest biography of Pieter Breughel the Elder is given in Carel van Mander's Schilderboek (1604). This passage (translated by F. Grossman) reveals the inventiveness with which the master approached his subject.

He settled down in Antwerp and there entered the painters' guild in the year of our Lord 1551. He did a great deal of work for a merchant, Hans Franckert, a noble and upright man, who found pleasure in Breughel's company and met him every day. With this Franckert, Breughel often went out into the country to see the peasants at their fairs and weddings. Disguised as peasants they brought gifts like the other guests, claiming relationship or kinship with the bride or groom. Here Breughel delighted in observing the droll behaviour of the peasants, how they ate, drank, danced, capered or made love, all of which he was well able to reproduce cleverly and pleasantly in water colour or oils, being equally skilled in both processes. He represented the peasants, men and women, of the Campine and elsewhere naturally, as they really were, betraying their boorishness in the way they walked, danced, stood still or moved.

More than most, Rubens needed formidable powers of concentration to overcome the distractions of his fame. In 1621 a Danish physician, Otto Sperling, described his visit to Rubens' studio.

> [We found] the great artist at work. While still painting he was having Tacitus read aloud to him and at the same time was dictating a letter. When we kept silent so as not to disturb him with our talk, he himself began to talk to us while still continuing to work, to listen to the reading and to dictate his letter, answering our questions and thus displaying his astonishing power.

Quoted in
Peter C. Sutton
The Age of Rubens (1993)

The idea, associated with the picturesque, of improving or changing nature to express irregularity, is lampooned by William Combe in his satire of the Rev. William Gilpin:

I'll make this flat a shaggy ridge,
And O'er the water throw a bridge
I'll do as other sketchers do-
Put anything into the view . . .
Thus, though from truth I haply err,
The scene preserves its character.

Tour of Dr. Syntax in Search of the Picturesque (1809-1811)

Turner understood how to deal with the problem naturally ocurring when his paintings hung next to those of other artists at exhibitions.

In 1822, when Constable exhibited his 'Opening of Waterloo Bridge,' it was placed in the School of Painting, one of the small rooms at Somerset House. A sea piece by Turner was next to it- a grey picture, beautiful and true, but with no positive colour in any part if it. Constable's picture seemed as if painted with liquid gold and silver, and Turner came several times into the room while he was heightening with vermilion and lake the decorations and flags of the city barges. Turner stood behind him, looking from the 'Waterloo' to his own picture; and, putting a round daub of red lead, somewhat bigger than a shilling, on his grey sea, went away without a word. The intensity of the red lead, made more vivid by the coolness of his picture, caused even the vermilion and lake of Constable to look weak. On Leslie entering the room just as Turner had left it, "He has been here," said Constable, "and fired off a gun." On the opposite wall was a rather warm picture, by Jones, of 'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the Furnace.' "A coal," said Cooper, "has bounced across the room from Jones's picture, and set fire to Turner's sea." Turner did not come again into the room for a day and a half; and then, in the last moments that were allowed for painting, he glazed the scarlet seal he had put on his picture, and shaped it into a buoy.

Walter Thornbury
The life of J.M.W. Turner, R.A. (1862)

And again...

When his picture of 'Cologne' was exhibited in the year 1826, it was hung between two portraits, by Sir Thomas Lawrence, of Lady Wallscourt and Lady Robert Manners. The sky of Turner's picture being exceedingly bright, it had a most injurious effect on the colour of the two portraits, and Lawrence naturally felt mortified, and openly complained of the position. Artists at that time, it should be added, were permitted to retouch their pictures on the walls of the Academy. At a private view on the morning of the opening of the Exhibition, a friend of Turner's who had seen the 'Cologne' in all its splendour led a group of expectant critics up to it. He started back from it in consternation. The golden sky had changed to a dun colour. He ran up to the artist, who was in another part of the room. 'Turner, Turner, what have you been doing to your picture?' 'Oh!' muttered Turner, in a low voice; 'poor Lawrence was so unhappy! It's only lampblack. It'll all wash off after the exhibition!' He had actually passed a wash of lampblack in water-colour over the sky, and utterly spoiled his picture for the time; and so he let it remain through the Exhibition, to gratify Lawrence.

Walter Thornbury
The Life of J.M.W. Turner, R.A.(1862)

Frustrated in his ambitions as an academic painter of historical subjects, Robert Haydon, R.A. may never have known that his name would live on as one of the most entertaining diarists of his time.

4 July 1839

D'Orsay called, and pointed out several things to correct in the horse, verifying Lord Fitzroy's criticism of Sunday last. I did them, and he took my brush in his dandy gloves, which made my heart ache, and lowered the hind-quarters by bringing over a bit of the sky. Such a dress! white greatcoat, blue satin cravat, hair oiled and curling, hat of the primest curve and purest water, gloves scented with *eau de cologne* or *eau de jasmin*, primrose in tint, skin in tightness. In this prime of dandyism he took up a nasty, oily, dirty, hog-tool, and immortalised Copenhagen by touching the sky.

I thought, after he was gone, This won't do- a Frenchman touch Copenhagen! So out I rubbed all he had touched, and modified his hints myself.

Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846)
The Autobiography and Memoirs (1853)

Copenhagen was the name of Wellington's horse. Count D'Orsay was a Frenchman about town, and dandy of the day.

I must borrow this one from my first collection, Michelangelo's Snowman (1985).

But if the consolation for life is art, what may the artist expect from life?

An incident mentioned quite casually in Vasari's Lives of the Most Excellent Italian Architects, Painters and Sculptors always seems to me worth recalling. It teaches several lessons: that if you want something done get the best executant available to do it; that minor jobs are often worth taking on; that duration in time should not necessarily be the criterion in producing a work of art.

Vasari says that on a winter day in Florence, when snow was deep on the ground, one of the Medici sent for Michelangelo to build a snowman in the courtyard of the Medici palace. Notwithstanding those (like Constant Lambert) who dislike the High Renaissance one can scarcely doubt that the finest snowman on record took shape.

Anthony Powell
To Keep the Ball Rolling (1982)

John Singer Sargent watches the Boston Red Sox, in about 1918.

Lunch was not over when I explained to him I had to leave for a professional ball game. As I rose from the table, he did the same, and after a hasty apology to the hostess, joined me in the hall. "I'm going with you," he said, "for a first experience in watching American baseball." I knew it was useless to combat the determined look in his eye. My young man escort, whom we met at the entrance to the ball park, good-naturedly relinquished his seat, and Sargent and I were in a strategic position to see the entire field.

Instantly the scene fascinated him as an artist. He borrowed score cards from neighbors and steadily used a pencil in rapid strokes to catch the outline of players sliding bases. Poetry in motion, he termed it, only equalled by the sparkle of sunlight and varied shadows. He jumped about to sketch the teams in play.

Corinna Lindon Smith
Interesting People (1962)

Many painters have preferred northern light, for its consistency, but an American landscape painter from Old Lyme, Connecticut insisted on a southerly wind.

March 16, 1924

There's nothing that makes more difficulty to a landscape painter than the kind of wind that's blowing. You get that hazy sense of distance best on a day when there's a south wind or a southwest wind blowing. Some painters wait for a northeast wind, for they like clear sunlight and black shadows, a day in which everything stands out as clearly as if it were cut out of paper patterns. But personally I like to paint when there's a kind of hazy beauty in the air.

Wilson Henry Irvine
Journal

On his deathbed, the French painter, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796-1875), had a vision of painting in heaven:

He repairs to Coubron in the fall. Stricken by stomach cancer, his robust health begins to fail. The death of his sister, on October 14th, comes as a terrible blow. He nonetheless manages to finish the three major compositions destined for the Salon of 1875, including the mysterious and pathos-laden *Biblis*. He returns from Coubron on January 25th; he takes to his room, bed-ridden. To Robaut who assists him faithfully and follows day by day the progression of his illness, he confides on January 29th: "You cannot imagine what new things I've seen that remain to be done! I now perceive things that I've never seen before. It seems to me that I've never known how to do a sky! What I have before me is so much more pink, much deeper, more transparent! Oh, how I wish I could show you these vast horizons!" He dies peacefully on the morning of February 22nd, with the dream of painting as he would like in Paradise.

Jean Leymarie
Corot (1979)
F.H.S. Allen, Tr.

Hymns

Hymns have been part of our literary consciousness for so long that it is hard to imagine life without them. Some hymns carry rich associations with them, hymns we heard at school, hymns at holidays. Who can now sing "Nearer my God to Thee" without thinking about the film of the sinking of the Titanic? Yet, as with everything else, customs flourish according to the manners of the place.

To Isabella Stewart Gardner

Monte Carlo. March 24, 1914.

In the English Church at Monte Carlo it is impossible to give out a hymn with a number as low as 36, for fear lest the whole congregation leave the edifice to play the figure at the tables.

Matthew Prichard
Letters (unpublished)

An English art critic with unconventional views, Prichard knew Mrs. John L. Gardner, the art collector and creator of Fenway Court, when he lived in Boston from 1901-1907 and began a correspondence with her in which he expounded his views on art and aesthetics.

The first hymns in hymnals of the time were Christmas carols.

Caresse Crosby, widow of the 1920's literary figure, Harry Grew Crosby, found that hymn 602 inspired urgencies of another kind.

> I found no charm in the sons of family friends; that is, until Ben went off to boarding school and Miss Kimber took me to spend a weekend at Westminster to see how he was doing. The school was at Simsbury, Conn. It was run by Mr. and Mrs. Cushing and their sons, Bill, who taught something advanced, and Tom, who wrote and directed rather surrealistic school plays. Each time I attended chapel, and it was a church school, I noticed that hymn 602 was on the hymn board. And as soon as we rose, "I Need Thee, O I Need Thee" in all its adolescent agony rang forth while two hundred pairs of eyes were riveted on my burning cheeks. Tom Cromwell, a bespectacled first-grader, whose duty it was to list the hymns, told me, years later, that when I appeared he always supplied 602 for the eyes and throats of my otherwise mute venerators.
>
> Caresse Crosby
> The Passionate Years (1953)

The second line of the hymn is "Every hour of the day."

Fleischmann's Yeast

Uncle Mert and Auntie Mabel
Fainted at the breakfast table
This should be sufficient warning
Never do it in the morning
Fleischmann's Yeast has set them right
Now they do it every night
Uncle Mert is hoping soon
They can do it in the afternoon.

(TUNE: "Hark, The Herald Angels Sing.")

The same hymn offered Londoners, after the Abdication of Edward VIII in 1936, the opportunity to sing:

Hark, the Herald Angels sing,
Mrs. Simpson pinched our King.

Truly dedicated students of hymns as parodies might wish to consult Austin and Alta Fife's Heaven on Horseback *(1970) which gives the essence of the cowboy's creed.*

Nicholas T. Parsons found these lines, suggestive of Protestant vigor, by an anonymous Boston divine:

Ye monsters of the bubbling deep
  Your Maker's praises shout;
Up from the sand, ye codlings, leap
  And wag your tails about.

The Joy of Bad Verse (1988)

Even within the Catholic Church hymns were parodied when the occasion demanded. These are excerpts from a hymn composed by a Papist in Rome to mock the Jesuits and circulated in the 1720's to an anonymous British traveler, who translated them for his commonplace book. The music is lost to history.

To wealthiest cities, where
They most commodities may gather
Flies every Jesuitish father.

Best wine they drink, and eat good bread
With which no stranger sees them fed,
Nor notes how long they stay in bed.

Saffron, pepper nourish them
And roses of Jerusalem,
Of which no holy man doth dream.

When prisoners for their charity call,
They say they are deprived of all,
And must to our devotion fall.

Hymns have always been fertile ground for parodies. Their music being so well known, running constantly through one's head, different words and rhymes almost naturally fall into place. And, in a congregation, one can sing another version without attracting attention. In an earlier age humor, even earthy humor, was commonplace in the church.

Charles du Fresne, Seigneur du Cange (1610-1688), collected some curious monuments of church ritual in the Middle Ages in his Glossarium ad Scriptores Mediae et Infimiae Latinitatis. One of them represented the flight into Egypt, with a young woman upon an ass leading a procession from the Cathedral of Beauvais into the parish church of St. Etienne. Each stage of the church service terminated with an imitation of the ass's bray and, at the end of the mass, the priest brayed thrice as ordained by the Latin ritual (ter hinhannabit). Here are some excerpts of the hymn sung during the mass, translated from the French after the manner of Longfellow by Andrew Steinmetz for the 2 January 1858 issue of "Notes and Queries":

Here he is with big ears -
Primitive clod-hopper -
Ass as big as ever -
Lord of all the asses -

Wheat and barley loves he,
Thistle too he savors'
Wheat from chaff well knows he,
Browsing in the barnyard.

He-hawn! He-hawn! He-hawn-He!
Beautiful sire ass - for you can trot -
Beautiful muzzle is yours to sing.

The chorus, in the French vernacular, is of the grossest possible description, appealing directly to the vulgar senses. Du Cange notes that the more ridiculous the ceremony appeared, the more it conciliated the religious observance of the people, such being human nature.

Some have even used hymns to urge political organization. This one, entitled "Sons of Poverty Assemble", comes from the 19th century English National Chartist Hymn Book. We can almost hear a congregation lingering over "silken slumbers".

See the brave, ye spirit-broken,
  Who uphold your righteous cause:
Who against them hath not spoken?
  They are, just as Jesus was,
    Persecuted
By bad men and wicked laws.

Rouse them from their silken slumbers,
  Trouble them amidst their pride;
Swell your ranks, augment your numbers,
  Spread the Charter far and wide:
    Truth is with us,
God himself is on our side.

Or for missionary work, as among the native American Indians. The Rev. M. Eels even compiled a collection, Hymns in the Chinook Jargon Language (1878), which may have been thought to serve some purpose then but which appears offensive today.

Spose nesika muckamuck whiskey,
Whiskey muckamuck nesika dolla.

If we drink whiskey,
Whiskey will drink up our clothes.

Southern propagandists indeed found hymns a ready vehicle for exhorting the young to join the cause of the South during the Civil War.

Oh, do not be discouraged,
  For Jesus is your friend,
He will give you grace to conquer,
  And keep you to the end.
I am glad I'm in this army,
Yes, I'm glad I'm in this army,
And I'll battle for the school.

Fight oh you little soldiers,
  The battle you shall win,
The Saviour is your Captain,
  And he hath vanquished sin.
I am glad I'm in this army,
Yes I'm glad I'm in this army,
And I'll battle for the school.

The Confederate Sunday-School Hymn Book
Greenville, South Carolina, 1863

The negro pronunciation of "This Union" ("disunion") was turned to good advantage in the border states during the Civil War, the words being so spaced as to leave the phrase ambiguous and suitable therefore for any occasion. The following is a refrain from a popular hymn, "Stand on a Sea of Glass":

O disunion!
Sing disunion!
I love disunion!
Stand on a sea of glass.

William E. Barton
Old Plantation Hymns (1894)

Sir Francis Lindley, who ended his diplomatic career as British Ambassador to Japan in the 1930's, left among his papers this hymn as part of a Daily Service for use in Government Departments, according to a letter to the London Times of 11 June 1994.

O Thou who seest all things below
Grant that Thy Servants may go slow
That they may study to comply
With regulations till they die.

Teach us Lord to reverence
Committees more than common sense.
Impress our minds to make no plan.
But pass the baby when we can.
And when the tempter seems to give
Us feelings of initiative,
Or when alone we go too far
Chastise us with a circular.

Mid war and tumult, fire and storms
Strengthen us we pray with forms.
Thus will Thy servants ever be.
A flock of perfect sheep for Thee.

Miscellany

Perceptions fall into the brain rather as seeds into a furrowed field or even as sparks into a keg of powder.

George Santayana (1863-1952)

The index for G in Fortune Stanley's English Country House Cooking (1973) contains and suggests enough to last a lifetime.

Galette Lyonnaise, 116

Game, pie, 110

terrine, 56

Gateau Savoie, 129

Gigot d'agneau à la Russe, 78

Gingerbread, Grasmere, 140

Mrs Alsford's, 139

Gisborough sauce, 23

Glamorgan sausages, 52

Glengarry cream, 129-130

Golden buck, 151

Goodwood sauce, 23

Gooseberry soufflé, 130

Grasmere gingerbread, 140

Gratin de poireau, 52

Green summer soup, 14

Grouse, Levens, 106

potted, 107

Guard's Club cake, 140

Ejaculation: Short prayer darted up to God on emergent occasions.

Thomas Fuller (1608-1661)

Fuller's definition might qualify as an inadvertency, a term coined by Edward Gathorne-Hardy, in his amusing (privately printed) Inadvertencies (1966), to describe a line of poetry or passage of prose intended by the author to have one (innocuous) meaning at the time of writing but which takes on another (unintended) meaning with the passage of time and the evolution of language. For example:

She touched his organ; and from that bright epoch, even it, the old companion of his happiest hours, incapable, as he had thought, of elevation, began a new and deified existence.

Charles Dickens
Martin Chuzzlewit (1843-1844)

Thomas Percy (1729-1811), Bishop of Dromore, found the manuscript (ca. 1650) for what became his posthumously published Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript, Loose and Humorous Songs (1868) "lying dirty on the floor" and "being used by the maid to light the fire" at a friend's house. An early editor called Percy's folio the foundation document of English balladry. This is an excerpt from "A ffriende of mine":

And red rose lipps he kisst full sweete:
  quoth shee, "I craue no sucour."
which made him to haue a mighty mind
  to clipp, kisse, & to : ffuckk : plucke her
into his armes. "Nay! soft!" quoth shee,
  "what needeth all this doing?
ffor if you wilbe ruled by me,
  you shall vse small time in wooinge.

"ffor I will lay me downe," quoth shee,
  "vpon the slippery seggs,
& all my clothes Ile trusse vp round,
  & spread abroad my : leggs : eggs,
which I haue in my aperne heare
  vnder my girdle tuckt;
soe shall I be most ffine and braue,
  most ready to be : fuckt : ducket

"vnto some pleasant springing well;
  ffor now itts time of yeere
to decke, & bath, & trim ourselues
  both head, hands, ffeet & geere."

ffinis.

This early, and delightful, usage of the familiar four letter word did not appear in the extensive glossaries of the Bishop's works, owing presumably to Victorian sensibilities.

A census for New Haven, Connecticut affords a glimpse into the manner of life in New England in 1811.

29 houses concerned in foreign commerce,
41 stores of dry goods,
42 grocery stores,
4 ship chandlery do.
2 wholesale hardware do.
3 wholesale dry goods do.
1 wholesale glass and china do.
1 furrier's do.
10 appothecaries do.
6 traders in lumber,
1 in paper hangings,
6 shoe stores,
7 manufactories of hats,
30 shoe and boot makers,
9 carriage makers,
7 goldsmiths,
4 watch-makers,
4 harness-makers,
5 cabinet-makers,
50 carpenters and joiners,
3 comb-makers,
4 Windsor-chair-makers,
15 masons,
26 tailors,
14 coopers,
3 stone cutters,
5 hat stores,
4 book stores,
3 rope walks,
2 sail lofts,
1 ship-yard,
17 butchers,
16 schools,
12 inns,
5 tallow-chandlers,
2 brass-founders,
3 brasiers,
29 blacksmiths,
1 bell-founder,
9 tanners,
7 curriers,
2 block-makers,
5 barbers,
3 tinners,
1 wheelwright,
1 leather-dresser,
1 nailer,
2 paper-makers,
5 printing offices,
2 book-binders,
5 bakers, and
2 newspapers published.

THERE WERE ALSO,

6 clergymen,
16 lawyers,
9 practicing physicians, and
1 surgeon.

Timothy Dwight
Travels in New England and New York (1821-1822)

Letter to Mrs. John Winthrop

Charlton in N. England
23 July 1630

Remember to come well furnished wth linnen, woollen, some more beddinge, brasse, peuter, leather bottells, drinkinge hornes &c:

let my sonne provide 12: axes of severall sorts of the Braintree Smithe, or some other prime workman, whatever they coste, & some Augers great & smale, & many other necessaryes wch I cant now thinke of, as candles, sope, & store of beife suett, &c: once againe farewell my deare wife.

Thy faithfull husband
Jo: Winthrop.

. . . and for Naples at the time of the Napoleonic Wars.

> Everything had to be imported except silk stockings, soap, tortoiseshell snuffboxes, marble tables, ornamental furniture, and porcelaine figure groups. . .
>
> Susan Sontag
> Volcano Lover (1992)

The North American wood warblers provide some of the best of bird music. Man people have tried to set the bird song to words for ease of identification. Some of the lyrics seem to offer a playful communication between bird and man. Every bird watcher has his own collection.

Black-throated green warbler:

"Take it, take it, leisure-ly."

Chestnut-sided warbler:

"Very, very glad to meet you."

Hooded warbler:

"You must come to the woods or you won't see me."

Sir Charles and Lady Sydney Morgan wrote the delightful memoirs of Lady Cork's parrot, who bit everyone who was anyone in Regency London. And Julian Barnes has made Flaubert's parrot a literary hero. The music-loving Prince John of Lichtenstein bought Joseph Haydn's parrot at auction, presuming perhaps that it could sing snatches of the deceased master's work. Oliver Goldsmith, who knew a parrot who could pronounce the Ninth Commandment, nevertheless observed that parrots in France spoke more intelligibly than their English brethren. There do indeed seem to be many good accounts of French-speaking parrots.

On m'a rapporté - mais je n'ai pu en vérifier l'exactitude - que le maréchal Lyautey possedait un perroquet qui avait retenu dans son vocabulaire ces mots : - Quelle belle soirée! Quelle belle soirée! et les repétait souvent à bon escient.

Or, un soir, de retour chez lui, l'illustre soldat fut salué par cette même interjection qui tombait fort à propos. Mais quelle fut sa stupéfaction lorsqu'il se trouva devant le spectacle que lui offrait l'oiseau. En effet, celui-ci, qui avait passé la soirée en tête à tête avec un singe, avait été entièrement "plumé" par son compagnon de tous les jours et son : "Quelle belle soirée! Quelle belle soirée!" prenait cette fois-ci un sens à la fois cocasse et ironique.

Elian Finbert
Les Perroquets Vous Parlent (1975)

(Translation)

I heard the story - but I cannot verify it - that Marshall Lyautey (1854-1934) owned a parrot which incorporated these words in its vocabulary : What a beautiful evening! What a beautiful evening! and often repeated them in earnest.

Now one day the renowned soldier, on returning home, was greeted by the same interjection which seemed so in keeping with the fine evening. But what was his astonishment when he found himself before the spectacle presented by his bird. The parrot, which had spent the evening alone with a monkey, had been entirely defeathered by his everyday household companion. "What a beautiful evening! What a beautiful evening!", in that context, took on a droll and ironic meaning.

This oddity, an encoded weather report for 3 April 1933, is from the U.S. Congressional Hearings on Dirigible Disasters, 22 May - 6 June, 1933. This particular code has literary flair and one wants the rich prose to read on.

Washington numoil nihilist radnell deadly wabash.
Titusville sanno reflect unripe turfs.
Harrington bonfire gecko unfold.
George felger naked neggins.
Pas roofage gedby gafol.
Havana sorrow mabin caramel.
Father safable oak barfee rogue.
Wichita nineveh mulberry somnific cupsail.
Doucet nightfall naked gargarize birds.
Galveston sirup gullish sacred cupsail.
Sound narford naked ungear seemly.
Antonio surrogate fabella sausage cunette.
Davenport ridgy reflow feugar needs consort.
Birmingham simulate subjoin formosa faints.
Buffalo nightfire ribard gummut gently.
Evansville romulus seahog femme mends control.
Memphis similar suburb gammon medlar wired catsup.
Detroit negative rabate fengone miley currency.
Indianapolis regent seabate formal gently catsup.
Nashville samuda sabula ginmill mexico congregate.
Columbus rugate mallet farmable feline.

On the wall of the Saint-Martin Church at Aime, in the Tarentaise, one can read the charming supplication addressed to the God Silvain by the Imperial Procurator, Roman Governor des Alpes Graies et Pennines, Titus Pomponius Victor, vowing to consecrate 1,000 large trees to him. Here is Anatole France's translation as noted by Edoard Herriot in his Notes et Maximes (1961):

"Silvain,
dont l'image, abritée sous le frêne sacré, est à demi enveloppée de ses branches; dieu gardien de ce jardinet haut situé, nous te dédions ces vers, expression de nôtre reconnaissance. Tandis que, gouverneur de ce pays, je rends ici la justice et administre les biens des Césars, nous pouvons, à la faveur de ta protection bienveillante, parcourir sains et saufs ces campagnes et ces monts alpestres et fréquenter, sans crainte des hôtes qu'elle recèle, cette forêt de pins odorants qui t'est consacrée. Veuille accorder que moi et les miens retournions à Rome et qu'il nous soit donné de revoir et cultiver, sous ton patronage, les champs que nous possédons en Italie. Je fais voeu, dès à présent, de te consacrer mille grands arbres. Offrande pieuse de Titus Pomponius Victor, procurateur des Empereurs.

(Translation)

(Silvan, whose image, protected by sacred ash, is half covered by its branches; protector god of this small garden on high, we inscribe these verses to you as an expression of our gratitude. While here, as governor of this country, I render justice and administer the wealth of the Caesars, we can, through the favor of your benevolent protection, roam safe and sound across these fields and alpine mounts and travel, without fear of the host who people it, that forest of aromatic pines that is dedicated to you. Grant that I and my own may return to Rome and that it may be given to us to see again and till under your patronage the fields that we possess in Italy. I vow, at this very moment, to dedicate a thousand great trees to you. Humble offering of Titus Pomponius Victor, procurator of Emperors.)

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (1841-1935) kept for decades a listing of all the hundreds of books he read. The last entry, shortly before his death, was this book by Thornton Wilder:

Heaven's My Destination (1935)

The book was not, however, listed on the 2 April 1936 inventory of 12,478 volumes in Holmes' Washington, D.C. library or in the inventory of the library in Beverly Farms, Mass.

On one's travels, even on a literary journey, one may leave things behind.

> By the end of May [1840] the traveler was back in Berlin. Before he reached the capital he touched at Leghorn, Pisa, Genoa, sailed on Lago Maggiore, traveled to St. Gotthard in a sleigh, visited Lucerne, Basel, Mannheim, Mainz, Frankfort and Leipzig, all within thirteen days. In the same period he managed to lose an umbrella, a cloak, a box, a walking stick, an opera glass, a hat, a pillow, a pen knife, a purse, three towels, two neckerchiefs, two shirts, and, for a short time, his heart.
>
> Avrahm Yarmolinsky
> Turgenev (1959)

Seignor Verdero in his proper habitt

A suit & vest of a mandrake or night shade green.

A cloake of a Thistle colour faced with holly green.

A burdock green hat with an hat band of poppy leave vert set with emeralds and berylls, and a plume of parret green fethers.

Stockings of an Ivie green with sage colourd Garters

A Rue colourd shash or Girdle with Brake green fringe

Pantoffles of cabbage colour laced with sea holly or Eryngo green

Ribbins all about of figge leafe, Laurel, box green.

A fragment of Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682) copied by his daughter, Elizabeth Lyttelton, from his commonplace book into hers.

From an anonymous 18th century commonplace book in the Library of Congress:

Why is a Gardener the most extraordinary Man in the world?

As all his beds are more fruitful than King Priam's, no wonder that his nursery is fuller than the foundling Hospital. . . There is one particular quality in the nature of his beds, that they are never the worse, but rather the better, if he chance to water or even dung in them which I am ashamed to say he often does; though many Pots are standing by his bedside. Raking is more his business than his diversion. . .

His favorites are beauties of the most distinguished kinds. With Damask Roses, Eye-Bright, Cowslips and the Teton de Venus, and tho' he enjoys (them) by turn in high Bloom, his wife has Heart's ease enough, and never wishes for weeds. In short, Madam, he can boast of more bleeding Hearts than you, and of more Laurels than the Duke of Marlborough, but his greatest Pride, and the World's greatest Envy, is that he can have Yew when he pleases.

This is rather typical of the kind of private jeux d'esprit which appear in 18th century commonplace books.

The Concordance of the Works of Alexander Pope (Edwin Abbot, 1875) lists ninety lines in which the poet uses the word art (Art). Grouping them in a concordance allows us to study the evolving meaning of that important 18th century concept during Poe's lifetime (until his death in 1744). Here is a sample.

As, taught by Venus, Paris learnt the art

Bounded by Nature, narrow'd still by Art

Not touched by Nature, and not reach'd by Art

So vast is art, so narrow human wit

And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art

True ease in writing comes from art, not chance

Oh heav'n born sisters! source of art

To wake the soul by tender strokes of art

Blest with each talent and each art to please

Then all your Muse's softer art display

With softest manners, gentlest Art adorned

And Art still follow'd where her Eagles flew

No Art essay'd, but not to be admired

Even seed catalogues can yield a find. Here is a little inadvertency found by Stephen Tennant:

...good in a bed, but better still up against a wall.

Phillip Hoare
Serious Pleasures
The Life of Stephen Tennent (1990)

If you want to buy canoe racks or cider presses, snowshoes or lobster traps, you subscribe to "Uncle Henry's" magazine (since 1969) of classified advertisements in Maine. Some of the entries echo tragic little biographies, such as this heart-rending announcement.

Wedding dress. Size 18. Never worn.

From a period guidebook, Paris-Parisien, 1898-1899:

Presents for people who have everything.

A silver-mounted pot, in which to serve the broth or "pot-au-feu".

A toilet set in silver, or silver gilt.

A travelling-case, fitted with silver or silver-gilt pieces (see *at Kellers, 22, rue Joubert,*.

A small thorough-bred Japanese pug. (Very difficult to obtain).

Fine gold chain with precious stones, in the shape of a dog-collar.

Old stained-glass windows, or windows that have been expressly done by an artist, with the coat of arms, for the dining-room or dressing room.

The scores of Wagner's operas.

A hundred telegraph forms with the monogram and address (petits-bleus.)

A collection of valuable autographs in an elaborate case.

Writing contrivance for the carriage.

An electric lamp for the "coupé" or brougham.

Original sketches by well known artists.

18th century miniatures.

A chiming clock for the writing-table : *horloge de Westminster*.

A Venetian vase full of orchids.

A real Louis XIV or Louis XV bonbonnière, filled with Russian sweets.

Buckskin lined with silk for travelling. Very useful to avoid any contact with hotel sheets.

A small bag (ridicule) in fine gold links of mail, sprinkled with precious stones.

Epitaph

The noted writer on food, the late M.F.K. Fisher, tells us, in Consider the Oyster (1941), of a graveyard in Maine with this inscription on the tombstone:

G. Pearl Swallow
He died of a bad oyster

Even court judgements can be amusing if one has the stomach to read enough of them. A Justice of the Superior Court of Maine bases his judgement on 17th century law and practice in returning to private property owners the right to the intertidal zone on their beaches. The Justice heard testimony from several 17th century historians. Here is an excerpt from this unusual judgement:

> Recreation, like all other aspects of puritan life, had to serve a godly purpose. Excessive recreation, like excessive anything else, was anathema to the Puritan. The Puritans did not believe in exposing themselves to the sun. Neither the Puritans nor anyone else in 17th century Massachusetts, Maine or England believed in regular bathing as we know it today. Cleanliness was not next to godliness in the 17th century.
>
> Given the Puritans' disapproval of tanned skin (or at least their admiration for white skin) and given the infrequent bathing habits of the English, it seems unlikely that there was any consistent usage of public beaches, let alone private beaches, for sunbathing and swimming.
>
> William Brodrick
> 14 September 1987

At the siege of Chitral (Afghanistan) in November 1892.

The attack spent itself and, as the enemy turned, out rushed the defenders. In the rout that followed, the Kashmiri soldiers pulled off their trousers the better to give chase...

John Keay
The Gilgit Game (1979)

Individuality

Independency

At dinner with the Duke of Argyll during the Hebrides tour with Samuel Johnson, James Boswell captures a little gem of human absurdity.

25 October 1773

> The Duke wanted to show a specimen of marble. He sent the Colonel (Adam Livingstone M.P.) for it, who brought back the wrong piece; upon which he had to go back again to the other room, where it lay. He was conscious of an appearance of servility, but could not rebel. As he walked away, he whistled, to show his independency.

Diary

If Livingstone's independency helps us to understand the behavior, to appreciate it elsewhere or to remember it as a model, it becomes an exemplum, or interpolated anecdote, serving as an example of human excellence or weakness. Models of perversity, perfidy, irreverence, glorious death, and mean-spiritedness follow - but the list of behavioral examples in history and literature is all but endless, if one acquires the habit of noticing them.

There are risks in being too hasty to meet a new luminary, as Voltaire understood when he bided his time before presenting himself to Louis XV's new Queen, Marie Leszczynska.

> Moreover the place is a din, a fracas, a rush, and a frightful tumult. During these first days of confusion, I shall be very careful not to have myself presented to the Queen. . . I prefer her Majesty to be bored by the parlement and Chambre des comptes than by me.
>
> Letter to Marguerite-Madeleine du Moutier,
> Marquise de Bernières 17 September 1725

Coronations not only announce a new day but unfailingly bring out the best in participants and observers. The British painter, Haydon, gives a colorful description of the entrance of King George IV.

Every movement, as the time approached for the King's appearance, was pregnant with interest. The appearance of a monarch has something in it like the rising of a sun. There are indications which announce the luminary's approach; a streak of light-the tipping of a cloud-the singing of the lark-the brilliance of the sky, till the cloud edges get brighter and brighter, and he rises majestically into the heavens. So with a King's advance. A whisper of mystery turns all eyes to the throne. Suddenly two or three rise; others fall back; some talk, direct, hurry, stand still, or disappear. Then three or four of high rank appear from behind the throne; an interval is left; the crowds scarce breathe. Something rustles, and a being buried in satin, feathers, and diamonds rolls gracefully into his seat. The room rises with a sort of feathered, silken thunder. Plumes wave, eyes sparkle, glasses are out, mouths smile, and one man becomes the prime object of attraction to thousands. The way in which the King bowed was really royal. As he looked toward the peeresses and foreign ambassadors he showed like some gorgeous bird of the East.

Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846)
Autobiography and Memoirs (1853)

Of all persons clergymen are the most irreverent in the handling or things supposed to be sacred, and next to them clergymen's wives, and after them those other ladies, old or young, who take upon themselves semi-clerical duties. And it is natural that it should be so; for is it not said that familiarity does breed contempt? When a parson takes his lay friend over his church on a week day, how much less of the spirit of genuflexion and head-uncovering the clergyman will display than the layman! The parson pulls about the woodwork and knocks about the stonework, as though it were mere wood and stone; and talks aloud in the aisle, and treats even the reading-desk as a common thing; whereas the visitor whispers gently, and carries himself as though even in looking at a church he was bound to regard himself as performing some service that was half divine.

Anthony Trollope
The Last Chronicle of Barset (1867)

Marital discussion:

Mrs. Bennett: If it were not for the entail, I should not mind it.
Mr. Bennett: What should you not mind?
Mrs. Bennett: I should not mind anything at all.
Mr. Bennett: Let us be thankful that you are preserved from a state of such insensibility.

Jane Austen
Pride and Prejudice (1813)

But Clive was more than Omichund's match in Omichund's own arts. The man, he said, was a villain. Any artifice which would defeat such knavery was justifiable. The best course would be to promise what was asked. Omichund would soon be at their mercy; and then they might punish him by withholding from him, not only the bribe which he now demanded, but also the compensation which all the other sufferers of Calcutta were to receive.

His advice was taken. But how was the wary and sagacious Hindoo to be deceived? He had demanded that an article touching his claims should be inserted in the treaty between Meer Jaffier and the English, and he would not be satisfied unless he saw it with his own eyes. Clive had an expedient ready. Two treaties were drawn up, one on white paper, the other on red, the former real, the latter fictitious. In the former Omichund's name was not mentioned; the latter, which was to be shown to him, contained a stipulation in his favour.

But another difficulty arose. Admiral Watson had scruples about signing the red treaty. Omichund's vigilance and acuteness were such that the absence of so important a name would probably awaken his suspicions. But Clive was not a man to do any thing by halves. We almost blush to write it. He forged Admiral Watson's name.

Lord Macaulay
Essays (1840)

Glorious death (British):

General James Wolfe on the eve of his victory and death in 1759 at the Battle of Quebec.

For full two hours the procession of boats, borne on the current, steered silently down the St. Lawrence. The stars were visible, but the night was moonless and sufficiently dark. The general was in one of the foremost boats, and near him was a young midshipman, John Robison, afterwards professor of natural philosophy in the University of Edinburgh. He used to tell in his later life how Wolfe, with a low voice, repeated Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" to the officers about him. Probably it was to relieve the intense strain of his thoughts. Among the rest was the verse which his own fate was soon to illustrate,-

"the paths of glory lead but to the grave."

"Gentlemen," he said, as his recital ended, "I would rather have written those lines than take Quebec." None were there to tell him that the hero is greater than the poet.

Francis Parkman
Montcalm and Wolfe (1887)

Glorious death (French):

> "Ah! Bourrienne, you also will be immortal!" said Napoleon
> "How, General?"
> "Are you not my secretary?"

But Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne's Mémoires fell under criticism as soon as they were published in 1828. Bourrienne, himself, admitted to some exaggerations as in his account of Desaix's death at the Battle of Marengo. In his bulletin on the incident, Bourrienne had given these words to the dying Desaix:

> Allez dire au premier consul, que je meurs avec le regret de n'avoir pas assez fait pour vivre dans la postérite.

In the memoirs, Bourrienne recants:

> The death of Desaix has been variously related, and I need not now state that the words attributed to him in the bulletin were imaginary. Neither did he die in the arms of his *aide de camp*, Lebrun, as I wrote from the dictation of the First Consul. The following facts are more correct, or at all event more probable: - The death of Desaix was not perceived at the moment it took place. He fell without saying a word, at a little distance from Lefebvre-Desnouettes. A sergeant of battalion of the 9th brigade of light infantry, commanded by Barrois, seeing him extended on the ground, asked permission to pick up his cloak.

The arrival of General Louis Charles Antoine Des Aix (called Desaix) at Marengo decided the battle on 14 June 1800.

Frederick the Great, in a pique of mean-spiritedness, reduced Voltaire's rations of chocolate.

Marie de Medici had the strangest of all dislikes. She could not bear the sight of a rose.

Thomas Hardy
Literary Notebooks

Economy and exactitude are hallmarks of the perfect diary entry. Important events in the universe of the diarist should have just the same priority as major events in the world outside. Here is a masterful entry by that most acute observer, Gilbert White.

Jan. 21 (1793)

Thrush sings, the song-thrush: the missile-thrush has not been heard. On this day Louis 16th, late King of France, was beheaded at Paris and his body flung into a deep grave without any coffin, or funeral service performed.

Gervas Huxley, notices another unusual coincidence of daily news and an historic event.

The death of the Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell, 'that most excellent Prince', was the news that the Gazette of September 9th, 1658, broke to London. But its columns also carried an advertisement of historic interest, running as follows:

"That excellent and by all Physicians approved drink called by the Chineans Tcha, by other nations Tay alias Tea is sold at the Sultaness Head a cophee house in Sweeting's Rents by the Royal Exchange London."

This is the first known reference to the sale of tea in Britain.

Gervas Huxley
Talking of Tea (1956)

Contrast with the diary of the Cambridge antiquarian, William Cole which his biographer, the encyclopedic John Nichols (1745-1826), found "truly laughable".

Jan. 25, 1766. Foggy, My beautiful parrot died at ten at night, without knowing the cause of his illness, he being very well last night.

Feb. 1, Saturday. Fine day and cold, Will Wood junior carried three or four loads of dung into the Clay-pit close. Baptized William the son of William Grace, blacksmith, who I married about six months before.

March 3, Monday. I baptized Sarah, the bastard daughter of the Widow Smallwood of Eton, aged near 50, whose husband died above a year ago.

6, Thursday. Very fine weather. My man was blooded. I sent a loin of pork and a spare rib to Mr. Cartwright in London.

8, Saturday. Very fine weather. Mr. Cartwright brought me a quarter of house lamb from London.

27, Thursday. I sent my two French wigs to my London barber to alter them, they being made so miserably I could not wear them.

May 3, Cold and rainy. My knee, where it was strained, uneasy. I had it pumped upon at the pump in the yard.

Or consider the diary for August 1684 of Elias Ashmole, the historian and collector who left his name to the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford.

Aug. 6. I rubbed the skin near my rump whereupon it began to be very sore.
8. I purged.
9. I took leeches.
10. I purged again.
19. I fell into a looseness, which continued two days.
24. Mr. Agar lanced the sore.
26. Being hard bound I was two hours before I could to stool, and then with exceeding trouble.

The 17th century was a tough century. Ashmole survived smallpox, measles, swine pox, falling into a fire, being kicked by a horse and falling off the roof of a barn. He was accustomed to boils, chronic toothaches, and gout. However inelegant, his diary tells the story.

Last words:

Near Smithfield, Virginia 29 August 1864

Gen. Torbert had an uncomfortable habit of riding along the skirmish line, attended by his full staff, orderlies, headquarters flag and cavalry escort. Of course this made a small army in itself and was calculated to attract attention anywhere. It most certainly did from the enemy and they never omitted to send all the compliments of the season in the shape of lead and iron which they had at command. Torbert was a very handsome man himself and always beautifully mounted and conspicuously dressed. He liked his staff to follow his example in the latter respects, and they were perfectly well aware of it, and naturally anxious to please him. On the day of which I am speaking, the General was riding on the line of skirmishers of Merritt's division as they were falling back and talking rather strongly to the troopers about their unnecessary expenditure of ammunition; Surgeon Rulison, the Medical Director of the Corps, and I were riding by his side, and he had just pointed out to a trooper who had fired his carbine that "You couldn't hit a barn-door at that distance" when a bullet from an enemy's rifle struck poor Rulison in the side just above his belt. He died in a few moments, and was greatly regretted by all who knew him including the General himself, but it made no difference in his habit of riding among the skirmishers.

Fighting Rebels and Redskins,
Experiences in Army Life of
Colonel George Sanford, 1862-1892.

Packing lists often reveal character. Here Richard Monckton Milnes (later Lord Houghton) prepares for a trip up the Nile in 1842.

> "List of luxuries to take up the Nile" Milnes wrote out in his scrabbly handwriting at the top of a blank page of a notebook. The luxuries included recipes for 'making everything that can be made of mutton, pigeons, chickens, eggs, and rice,' some extra panes of glass in case those in the cabin broke, a pair of black spectacles, a draught-board, a stuffed pack-saddle, chisels for removing hieroglyphics from temple walls, and 'a small camp-stool for a boy to carry behind you when you go out walking, there being no stones or places to sit and rest on.'
>
> James Pope Hennessy
> Monckton Milnes, The Years of Promise (1949)

Ten years earlier, Robert Curzon, who was to give us Visits to Monasteries in the Levant (1849), thought more in terms of necessities when he wrote his friend Rev. Walter Sneyd on 10 July 1832:

> As you asked me to send you word what you ought to get to take with you on our journey to foreign parts, I will tell you...Unless you have a liking for lice and other varment you had better take a box of mercurial ointment with you to Sicily; and if you come with me to the East it would perhaps be well to get yourself circumsized in England, and to have your head shaved smooth before you go...

Experienced travelers are sensitive about their medical kits. Here is what Norman Douglas felt he needed for survival in Old Calabria (1915):

> (I) began to run over the scanty stock of household remedies contained in my bag...There was court plaster, and boot polish, quinine, corrosive sublimate, and Worcester sauce (detestable stuff but indispensable hereabouts).

The journal-letters of the extravagant and eccentric Prince Hermann Pückler-Muskau (1785-1871) describing his visit to London in 1826-1828 achieved wide readership when they were published anonymously as Letters from a Dead Man in 1830 and have remained an entertaining picture of the Age of Elegance. His name, considered the height of absurdity, spawned a number of witty variations such as Prince Pickling Mustard. Here he takes the trouble to note the clothing requirements of a London dandy, as cleverly obtained from his laundress:

London, June 7th, 1827

As a sample of the necessities of a London dandy, I send you the following statement by my 'fashionable' washerwoman, who is employed by some of the most distinguished 'elegants', and is the only person who can make cravats of the right stiffness, or fold the breasts of shirts with plaits of the right size. An 'elegant', then, requires per week, - Twenty shirts; twenty-four pocket-handkerchiefs, nine or ten pairs of 'summer trowsers'; thirty neck-handkerchiefs (unless he wears black ones); a dozen waistcoats; and stockings 'a discretion'.

I see your housewifely soul aghast. But as a dandy cannot get on without dressing three or four times a day, the affair is 'tout simple', for he must appear,-

1st. In breakfast toilette, - a chintz dressing gown and Turkish slippers.

2nd. Morning riding dress, - frock coat, boots and spurs.

3rd. Dinner dress, - dress coat and shoes.

4th. Ball dress, with 'pumps', a word signifying shoes as thin as paper.

The travel liar, a sub-species of the literary impostor, was an accepted - if not well-known - figure in the 18th century English book world. Fictitious travel accounts and geographies abounded. Perhaps the most celebrated (for the sheer magnitude of its invention) was George Psalmanazar's work on Formosa.

> Maids, for the most part, when they come to be 18 or 20 years Old, are troubled with a certain Disease, which we call *Chatarsko*, and here in *England*, is called the *Green-Sickness*, which makes them Melancholy, and destroys all their appetite to any thing except Matrimony, corrupts the Blood, and makes them pale-colour'd. This Disease is peculiar to the Female Sex, for which there is no other Remedy but Marriage.
>
> George Psalmanazar
> An Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa (1704)

At the end of the day Psalmanazar, who went to the extreme of inventing a Formosan alphabet, was unmasked by the astronomer, Edmund Halley, who asked him, among other things, what time twilight fell in Formosa.

Letters of dismissal are a delicate art form and something of a rarity too, for why would the recipients wish to broadcast or keep them? Here Mme. de L'Esparbès dismisses the Duc de Lauzun (1633-1723):

> Many reasons, which would take me too long to enumerate severally, oblige me to request you make your visits less frequent.

And Lady Frances Rich throws up some ramparts against the advances of John Russell in about 1662:

> I am very sorry you have entertained an affection which proves so troublesome to you & hope you will not wonder if I take care to preserve myself from the passion which has done you so much mischief.

For a fictional interpretation of this epistolary thorn let us turn to Anthony Trollope's <u>*The Prime Minister*</u> *(1876) wherein Emily Wharton leaves childhood friend Arthur Fletcher behind*:

> My dear Arthur,
> There has been so much true friendship and affection between us that I do not like that you should hear from anyone but myself the news that I am going to be married to Mr Lopez on the 28th of November.
>
> Yours Affectionately,
> Emily Wharton.

But Fletcher sends an arrow back, perhaps the shortest epistolary reply on record:

> Dear Emily,
> I am as I always have been,
>
> Yours,
> A.F.

> Two other traits were revealed to [Einstein's] friends who sailed with him. One was his indifference to danger or death, reflected in such fearlessness of rough weather that more than once he had to be towed in after his mast had been blown down. Another was his perverse delight in doing the unexpected. "Once when out sailing with him." writes Watters, "and while we were engaged in an interesting conversation, I suddenly cried out 'Achtung' for we were almost upon another boat. He veered away with excellent control and when I remarked what a close call we had had, he started to laugh and sailed directly toward one boat after another, much to my horror, but he always veered off in time, and then laughed like a naughty boy."
>
> Ronald Clark
> Einstein, His Life and Times (1971)

Leon Watters, a biochemist and head of the Hebrew Technical Institute in New York City, was an intimate friend of Einstein's for the last two decades of his life. For a few years Watters acted as a sort of minor Boswell in recording his meetings with the sage, and the notes are rich with anecdote.

Einstein's academic friends were no doubt too busy appreciating themselves to consider that the great man could befriend his next door neighbor in Princeton, a young musician by the name of Lester Lanin, who went on to become a leading society orchestra leader in America for three generations. But, then, who would have dared to invite T.S. Eliot and Groucho Marx to the same dinner? Yet they met at table during a transatlantic crossing and became fast friends.

The Chaplain of the U.S. Senate, Richard C. Halverson, has a style very much his own. Here is one of his invocations, for March 1992.

Gracious Father, investigative reporting seems endemic in an election year - its primary objective to defame political candidates. Seeking their own reputation, they destroy another's as they search relentlessly, microscopically for some skeleton in a person's life. Eternal Father, help these self-serving "vacuum cleaner journalists" to discover how unproductive and divisive their efforts are.

P.G. Wodehouse, oddly enough, was 'in', though one had a feeling that he had been admitted by the servants' entrance. He was a sort of licensed buffoon, and it was quite permissible to wander round Bedford Square with a portfolio of Braque drawings, a volume of Lytton Strachey's essays, a copy of *The Times Literary Supplement* and...the latest Jeeves. (I must pause a moment to tell my favourite Wodehouse story. Once we went to the Zoo together. After a while we found ourselves in the monkey house. A large and ferocious-looking monkey stalked towards us, and stared. Plum Wodehouse stared back. Then the monkey got bored, turned round, and walked away, disclosing the fact that it was one of those monkeys with very bright behinds. This was, indeed, a behind to end all behinds, scarlet and purple and orange, Plum sighed and shook his head. 'That monkey,' he said, 'is wearing its club colours in the wrong place.')

Beverley Nichols
The Sweet and Twenties (1958)

... and baboons

I visited the Bronx Zoo in May 1991 in a private group which included the novelist, Louis Auchincloss. The guide led us, after luncheon in a thatched hut with suitable refreshments, to the prized Ethiopian Baboon exhibit. The males in the two rival groups, he explained, cross an invisible frontier dividing them, and incite hostilities. But when fighting breaks out, the males retreat behind a shelter of rocks and let the females battle it out. "That," said the novelist of manners, "represents the highest form of civilization."

George Herrick

Games

Miss Dale, in Anthony Trollope's The Last Chronicle of Barset (1867) put it best:

> Have you ever observed, Grace, how much amusement gentlemen require, and how imperative it is that some other game should be provided when one game fails?

For me the great man at play or merely, and especially, doing commonplace things invites sympathy. The diarist, Samuel Sewall, climbing onto a roof or the painter, William Turner, fishing with an umbrella, show us the human side of genius. The incongruity of their private activity in relation to their public personae appeals.

> But what we liked to do was to play, and for this we were punished by those who were themselves behaving in just the same way. But the amusements of older people are called "business," and when children indulge in their own amusements, these older people punish them for it. And no one is sorry for the children; no one is sorry for the older people; no one is sorry for both of them.
> I doubt whether any good judge of things would say that it was a good thing for me, as a boy, to be beaten for playing some ball game simply on the grounds that by playing this game I was impeded in my studies, the point of which was that I should be able to perform, when I grew older, in some game more unbecoming still.
>
> Confessions of St. Augustine (400 A.D.)

Even the dean of American diarists carries a sense of games into older age. Samuel Sewall (then 61) clambers up on the roof to solve a problem familiar to modern day parents. I like to think of this as a very early reference to what we in America know today as roof ball, although the O.E.D. definition for trap ball is different. Why else would the ball have been thrown onto the roof?

Satterday, June, 6 (1713). The Rain-water grievously runs into my son Joseph's Chamber from the N. Window above. As went out to the Barber's I observ'd the water to run trickling down a great pace from the Coving. I went on the Roof, and found the Spout next Salter's stop'd, but could not free it with my Stick. Boston went up, and found his pole too big, which I warn'd him of before; came down a Spit, and clear'd the Leaden-throat, by thrusting out a Trap-Ball that stuck there. Thus a small matter greatly incommodes us; and when God pleases, tis easily remov'd. The Rain that fell the two Nights and Lords-day following was in such Abundance, we had been almost Drown'd, if the Spout had not been cleared.

Samuel Sewall
Diary

The British painter, J.M.W. Turner, goes fishing with artistic flourish:

. . . an umbrella invariably accompanied him; rain or sunshine, storm or calm, there was that old faded article tucked under his arm. Now, the umbrella answered a double purpose, for by some contrivance the stick could be separated from the other parts; this then formed a fishing-rod, being hollow, with several joints running one into the other. I have seen him sitting patiently for hours by the side of a piece of water belonging to the property, his piscatory propensities keeping up his excitement, though perhaps without a single nibble; yet it must not be understood that he was always unlucky, for when fortune favored him in securing any of the finny tribe, it was not long before we were made acquainted with his success, at which he appeared as much pleased as a boy from school.

Walter Thornbury
The Life of J.M.W. Turner, R.A. (1862)

An American diplomat reports a (possibly apocryphal) Byron anecdote he heard in Constantinople in the 1890's.

On another occasion Lord Byron put on a charade. The curtain rose to disclose a stage bare except for an unpainted clotheshorse of pine, known in England as deal, and, when no one could guess what it meant, he prompted, "An island in the Aegean." Still no light dawned. Finally he had to explain that the answer was "Delos." ("Deal 'oss.")

Again the curtain lifted to reveal the identical scene. "Another island," Lord Byron announced. The audience had to be told it was "Samos." ("Same 'oss.")

For the third time the curtain unveiled the same setting. Strangely enough no one was sufficiently clever to suggest "Naxos."
("Next 'oss.")

Lloyd Griscom
Diplomatically Speaking (1940)

Croquet can become as acrimonious among the literary elite..

When six or seven Stracheys became involved in an argument over the dinner table, as almost always happened, the roar and rumble, the shrill shrieks, the bursts of laughter, the sound and fury of excitement were deafening and to an unprepared stranger paralysing. And these verbal typhoons were not confined to literary discussions and the dinner table. I was once playing croquet with Lytton, Marjorie, and James when I stayed with them in a house near Bedford and a dispute broke out between the three Stracheys over some point in the game. I stood aside waiting until the storm should subside. The noise was terrific. The back of the house, which was, I think, early Georgian, looked down with its, say, eighteen windows upon the lawn where we were playing. By chance I looked up at the house and was delighted to see a Strachey face at each of the eighteen windows watching the three furious gesticulating figures and listening, I think appreciatively, to the noise and excitement.

Leonard Woolf
Sowing, An Autobiography of
The Years 1880-1904 (1960)

. . . as cricket among South Seas islanders.

These people quarrelled because of the cricket. The people of Kwaybwaga went to M'tawa and cricketed; they counted and they said: "Who has won?" The people of Kwaybwaga spoke and addressed the people of M'tawa: "You lie, we others have won." The M'tawa people answered: "No, you have not really won." They quarrelled: "Good, we shall beat you." They hit one another with throwing-sticks. The people of M'tawa drove off the people of Kwaybwaga, and these latter departed to their village, saying: "Good, you have driven us off; but to-morrow come you to Omarakana. We shall beat you."

Bronislaw Malinowski
Coral Gardens and Their Magic (1935)

August 2 (1936) Clovelly Court, Bideford, Devonshire.

. . . we went to church this morning (this is the only house where I go). Mrs. Cadwallader in *Middlemarch*, when she married a clergyman, made up her mind to like sermons, and began by liking the end very much - and found it soon spread to the middle and the beginning. Laurence taught me an even better way, the 'Sermon game' - you look out for words beginning with each letter of the alphabet in succession, and if you get as far as Z (for which you may count a Z in the middle of a word) you cast a Bible on the ground and leave the building. It is palpitating. On this occasion we were held up by B, which seemed as if it would never come; and as the sermon was short neither of us got beyond M.

One result was that it made me listen to the sermon instead of going to sleep - and it was most rewarding.

Edward Marsh and Christopher Hassall
Ambrosia and Small Beer (1964)

And John Espy, in Strong Drink, Strong Language (1990) recalled that like most ministers' children he

early perfected several techniques for surviving sermons - counting games, making knights moves through the congregation using bald heads, or brown-haired, or ladies' hats for jumps; betting my right hand against my left on what the division would be in the Lord's Prayer between "debts" and "trespasses."

. . . as do a host of counting games to pass the time on long journeys.

When the Yankees got on their train, the players would be together for six hours if it was a trip to Boston, or twenty if it was to St. Louis. They ate together, played cards together, and talked endlessly. If it was an especially long trip, they invented games. There was the game of cows, in which players had to match cows by color as the train swept through the farmland: If your cow was brown on one farm, then you needed a brown cow on the next farm to increase your score.

David Halberstam
Summer of '49 (1989)

If you wait half an hour on the Pont Neuf, it was said, you were sure to see an Abbé, a Benedictin, a Genovesin, a Capuchin, a Knight of St. Louis, a French Guardsman, a woman of the town, and a white horse cross during that time. This has been often tried and verified.

Robert Southey
Common-Place Book
Third Series (1850)

P.G. Wodehouse could write, "The fairway . . . smiled greenly up at the azure sky; and the sun, peeping above the trees, looked like a giant golf-ball perfectly lofted by the mashie of some unseen god and about to drop dead by the pin of the eighteenth." But the rough was his preferred terrain, the niblick his favorite golf club. Joseph Poskitt, "happiest among the flowering shrubs with his niblick," makes this unforgettable shot:

> A gaping chasm opened in the hillside. The air became full of a sort of macedoine of grass, dirt, flowers and beetles. And, dimly, in the centre of this moving hash, one perceived the ball, travelling well. Accompanied by about a pound of mixed solids, it cleared the brow and vanished from sight.
>
> P.G. Wodehouse
> "The Letter of the Law"

The putter, on the other hand, gets curiously little attention in Wodehouse's golfing stories although Archibald Mealing in "Archibald's Benefit", putted "with the care of one brushing flies off a sleeping Venus."

Few British writers have succeeded so well as Stephen Potter, the author of Gamesmanship (1947), in capturing the essence of the premier American pastime. Here he watches the Brooklyn Dodgers, that great team of the 1950's, defeat their archrivals, the New York Giants, at the Old Polo Grounds.

Thursday, 14th April (1956)

[He] helped me to understand something of the delicate balance of the game, of the fine adjustments of relative distances between bases, boundaries, and fieldsmen, which give this game its subtlety. It has this character, which I hold to be basic in the best games: It combines simplicity of purpose with an infinity of complex variations in the execution. Again I felt, also, that the strength and physique of the man with the bat and the rhythm and wristiness of his swing result in the most satisfactory HIT, the loudest, profoundest, and most thrilling thwack of any game I have seen, not even excluding the serve of Tilden, or the winding up of giant catapults before the drive of Snead or Weetman. The ground was not completely full - it is always crammed for the shorter season of football here - but the attention could not be more concentrated. There is a kind of mystical self-forgetfulness about it, but the concentration is not gentle and relaxed, as at Lord's: the spectators actually shout.

Stephen Potter
Potter on America (1956)

Picnics

The scene is all important for a picnic, although it must correspond to the conventions of the day so that the contrast with, the escape from, the demands of ordinary life is fully appreciated. Here is an extract from a vivid description of an Elizabethan hunting picnic.

The place should first be pight, on pleasant, gladsome green
Yet under shade of stately trees, where little sun is seen:
And near some fountain spring, whose crystal running streams
Mayhelp to cool the parching heat, yeaught by Phoebus' beams.
The place appointed thus, it neither shall be clad
With arras nor with tapestry, such paltry were too bad:
Nor yet those hot perfumes whereof proud courts do smell,
May once presume in such a place, a paradise, to dwell.
Away with feigned fresh, as broken boughs or leaves,
This place must of itself afford such sweet delight
And eke such show as better may content the greedy sight
Where sundry sorts of hues, which grow upon the ground,
May seem (indeed) such tapestry as we (by art) have found,
Where fresh and fragrant flowers may scorn the courtier's cost
Which daubs himself with civet, musk and many an ointment lost.

George Turberville
The Noble Arte of Venerie (1575)

During the summer of 1675 Catherine of Braganza, Queen of Charles II, made alfresco picnics on hot days in the forest around Windsor. In a letter of 7 September, Lady Chamworth left a charming picture of such a picnic.

> All the Queen's servants treated her by everyone bringing their dish, who then attended her into the forest, and she eat under a tree. Lady Bath's dish was a chine of beef, Mrs. Windham's a venison pasty, but Mr. Hall brought two dozen of ruffs and reeves and delicate baskets of fruit, Mr. Chiffinch, for his daughter's behalf, twelve dozen of choice wine. The Queen wonderfully pleased and merry, and none but herself and servants.

Companions and mood are likewise essential to the successful picnic. Here the artifice of surprise, assured by having the Queen's servants, or personal court attendants, bring some of the food, adds to the merriment. The well-mannered gleefulness of this royal picnic becomes hilarity or even boisterousness in 19th century picnics.

There must be a view, a prospect remote and full of poetry, insists Osbert Sitwell in his essay, Picnics and Pavillions. The discovery of the picnic site also involves the activity of getting there, by boat perhaps or, with Alexander Pope, by climbing.

> . . . We were very hungry, but the Aspect of the Towers, & the high crumbling Battlements, overgrown with Ivy, with a square room in ye middle out of wch at three large arches you saw ye main sea . . . provoked us first to look in, in order to chuse the best place to dine in. . . . after half an hour came my Lord, with great Boasts of what he had seen, higher up in the Land: He wd not hear of dining anywhere else. I cd not get him so much as to see ye Grove, but I followed him grumbling, weary, & hungry. . . . It was a ruin of a large Monastery, wch had once encompast three Quadrangles; the Cloister-Pillars of stone all standing . . . a great number of Vaults & Rooms, covered with Ivy & Weeds, & some Flowers, particularly many Rose-trees, here & there in the Courts. We . . . found Seats of the Capitals of two Pillars yt were dropt down, & made our Table of ye Length of another fallen Pillar. . .
>
> Alexander Pope
> Letter to Martha Blount
> (11 August, 1734)

Two picnic scenes from The Pickwick Papers (1837) by Charles Dickens, the master of the 19th century fictional picnic. There is another one in David Copperfield (1849-1850).

Tongue; well that's a wery good thing when it an't a woman's. Bread-knuckle o' ham, reg'lar picter-cold beef in slices, wery good. What's in them stone jars, young touch-and-go?'

'Beer in this one,' replied the boy, taking from his shoulder a couple of large stone bottles, fastened together by a leathern strap - 'cold punch in t'other.'

'And a wery good notion of a lunch it is, take it altogether,' said Mr. Weller, surveying his arrangement of the repast with great satisfaction.

'Now, gen'l'm'n, "fall on,"as the English said to the French when they fixed bagginets.'

It needed no second invitation to induce the party to yield full justice to the meal; and as little pressing did it require to induce Mr. Weller, the long gamekeeper, and the two boys, to station themselves on the grass, at a little distance, and do good execution upon a decent proportion of the viands. An old oak afforded a pleasant shelter to the group, and a rich prospect of arable and meadow land, intersected with luxuriant hedges, and richly ornamented with wood, lay spread out before them.

'This is delightful-thoroughly delightful!' said Mr. Pickwick. . .

'That's right-look sharp. Now the tongue-now the pigeon-pie. Take care of that veal and ham-mind the lobsters-take the salad out of the cloth-give me the dressing.' Such were the hurried orders which issued from the lips of Mr. Wardle, as he handed in the different articles described, and placed dishes in everybody's hands, and on everybody's knees, in endless number.

'Now an't this capital?' inquired that jolly personage, when the work of destruction had commenced.

'Capital!' said Mr. Winkle, who was carving a fowl on the box.

'Glass of wine?'

'With the greatest pleasure.'

'You'd better have a bottle to yourself, up there, hadn't you?'

'You're very good.'

Dickens is already using the word, picnic, in its emerging sense of a meal eaten out of doors, rather than in the obsolescent sense, sometimes derogatory, of a hotch-potch. Georgina Battiscombe (English Picnics, 1949) has an extended discussion of the etymology of the word.

Thomas Cole (1801-1848), the father of American landscape painting, made the archetypal picnic representation in his 1846 painting, The Pic-Nic. Cole had himself enjoyed eating outdoor lunches on excursions with friends. On 9 October 1838, he describes a trip to Catskills High Peak:

> The day was such a one as we should have chosen -- one of our heavy autumnal days, when the sun shines blandly through a clear and cloudless sky, and the crystal atmosphere cast a veil of beauty over the landscape, rich with the lovliest tints. Sundry baskets, containing many good things, provided by the ladies, were placed in the wagons, giving weighty promise that we should not die of famine among the mountains....The party was in the highest spirits....Scattered in groups, we went loitering along, sometimes stopping to pick a flower or a pebble, and to gaze upon precipices above us, or into the gulf below, where flows the Catskill with many a rush and bound....But we could not linger to gaze upon this. We were hungry, and the wagons having overtaken us, it was proposed we dine at a charming waterfall close by.
>
> Diary of Thomas Cole

This selection comes from Pic-Nic (1987), an unpublished dissertation by M.E.W. Hern, a study of the American picnic as an historical and cultural event as well as artistic subject.

Washington Irving evokes similar values in a letter to his sister about life in the lower Hudson Valley:

> Some of our neighbors are here only for the summer, having their winter establishments in town; others remain in the country all year. They are generally in opulent, or at least easy, circumstances; well bred and well informed;....We have frequent gatherings at each others houses, without parade or expense, and I do not know when I have Seen more delightful little parties; or more elegant little groups of females. We have occasionally excellent music,...and our parties always end with a dance. We have pic nic parties, also, Sometimes in some inland valley, or a piece of wood, Sometimes on the banks of the Hudson, where some repair by land and others by water. You would be delighted with these picturesque assemblages, on some wild woodland point jutting into the Tappan Sea. With gay groups on the grass under the trees; carriages glistening through the woods;...and rowboats plying to and from it filled with lady passengers.
>
> Washington Irving
> Letter to Sarah Van Wart,
> December 1840

Picnics had become a widespread, if not stylized, form of recreation in America by the middle of the 19th century. Here is a lively picnic on 11 June 1861 in Concord, Massachussetts. Some of the themes in evidence here are freedom from the restraints of ordinary life, general hilarity and adaption to nature by cooking out of doors.

We have had a picnic and chowder on Egg-rock today....

...At 2 o'clock all was ready-the table elegantly set, & all arranged for eating. A pot full of chowder, a goodly lot of fried potatoes, plenty of lobster salad, pies, doughnuts, oranges, pineapples, claret wine, etc., constituted the food and drink.

Two milk cans full of hot coffee, added to the drinkables by Mrs. Brown, were very acceptable indeed. We had "all sorts of a time." I think I never saw fun & frolic & enjoyment more carried out. Judge French & Geo. Keyes seemed to be perfectly possessed with the spirit of fun & deviltry-they knocked everybody about as if they were so many ninepins. I, portly as I am, & inclined rather to sobriety as I was, got rolled up in a carpet, had an india cracker exploded in my face, & a mug of coffee which I was drinking suddenly hit so as to spill it into my face & bosom. As for the women, they met with no mercy in being tormented & hustled about, & all sorts of fun was perpetrated on everybody. We voted it, unanimously, the best picnic & chowder that ever was. At about 5 we broke up & went our several ways....

Benjamin Brown French
Witness to the Young Republic,
a Yankee's Journal 1828-1870 (1989)

Benjamin French, a clerk in the House of Representatives in Washington, had a ringside seat for observing the events of his day.

In describing a Maine picnic, Sarah Orne Jewett in her most celebrated book allows us to see the processional movement of the family to the picnic site.

> We were no more a New England family celebrating its own existence and simple progress; we carried the tokens and inheritance of all such households from which this had descended, and were only the latest of our line. We possessed the instincts of a far forgotten childhood;....So we came to the thick shaded grove still silent, and were set in our places by the straight trees that swayed together and let sunshine through here and there like a single golden leaf that flickered down, vanishing in the cool shade.

Sarah Orne Jewett
Country of the Pointed Firs (1896)

Gone are the days of such picnics as that to which Rossini alluded when, on meeting Patti and congratulating her upon her incomparable singing, he remarked,

"Madame, I have only cried twice in my life; once, when I dropped a wing of truffled chicken into Lake Como, and once, when for the first time I heard you sing."

The Edwardian picnics, still more profuse, and even decadent in their luxury, and in the ingenuity of the mechanical toys employed to minister to the comforts of the rich in the open air, have vanished together with the footmen who served them - and, I should say, for ever.

Osbert Sitwell
"Picnics and Pavillions"
Sing High! Sing Low! (1944)

Talk

It is a simple matter to collect the table talk of a great wit or raconteur. They are usually only too willing to cooperate. But attempting the description of the conversational style or harder still, the voice of a speaker is a challenge that awaits every biographer, for we must know how the subject talked and sounded. Parody is one method and there are many accounts, for example, of Henry James' talk. Indeed he was almost a parody of himself. Favored expressions of a period or a given circle of friends are helpful, and analogy is used to convey the sound or style of the talker. These few words, quoted by Christopher Hobhouse in Oxford (1939), give a hint of the wonderful modulation of Cardinal Newman's voice;

> Through the silence of that high Gothic building the words fell on the ear like the measured drippings of water in some vast dim cave.

Osbert Sitwell digs deeper to get the sound of the Bloomsbury voice. Short of phonetic transcription it would be hard to do better.

> The tones would convey with supreme efficacy the requisite degree of paradoxical interest, surprise, incredulity: In actual sound, analyzed, they were unemphatic, save when emphasis was not to be expected; then there would be a sticky stress, high where you would have presumed low, and the whole spoken sentence would run, as it were, at different speeds and on different gears, and contain a deal of expert but apparently meaningless syncopation.
>
> Laughter in the Next Room (1948)

Jean-Francois Marmontel (1723-1799) observed some of the techniques for conversational survival at Madame de Tencin's celebrated Parisian salon.

> One arrived ready to play one's part but the desire to be on stage did not always allow the conversation the freedom to follow its easy and natural course. He who could most readily take advantage of the fleeting moment, said his word, told his story or his anecdote, pronounced his maxim or his biting witticism; the talk involved in bringing up a subject was sometimes a little far-fetched. Marivaux's impatience to prove his wit and wisdom was obvious. Montesquieu with greater calm, waited for the ball to be in his court; but he was waiting for it. Mairan watched for an opportunity... Fontenelle alone let it come to him without seeking it, and he used the attention accorded him so soberly that his wit and pretty tales never took more than a moment. Helvétius, attentive and discreet, gathered seeds to sow them again another day.
>
> Mémoires d'un père pour servir à l'instruction de ses enfants

And Rousseau recalled the conversation of Madame de Luxembourg, another of the famed 18th century salonnières.

> But she was considered wicked, which reputation in such a grand lady made me tremble. As soon as I saw her I was captivated. I found her charming, with that time-tested charm most calculated to affect my heart. I expected to find her conversation biting and full of epigrams. But it was not like that; it was much better. Madame de Luxembourg's conversation does not sparkle with wit. It does not consist of sallies nor even exactly finesse: but there is an exquisite delicacy which is never striking but always pleasing. Her compliments are all the more intoxicating for their simplicity; they seem to escape without her noticing, and pour straight from her heart only because it is overflowing.
>
> Confessions (1764-1770)

I must borrow once more from my first collection, Michelangelo's Snowman (1985), to award Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. his proper place in this constellation.

April 3, 1870

I went to the club last Saturday, and met some of the friends you always like to hear of. I sat by the side of Emerson, who always charms me with his delicious voice, his fine sense and wit, and the delicate way he steps about the words of his vocabulary: if you have seen a cat picking her footsteps in the wet weather, you have seen the picture of Emerson's exquisite intelligence feeling for its phrase or epithet; sometimes I think of an ant-eater singling out his insects, as I see him looking about, and at last seizing his noun or adjective, the best, the only one which would serve the need of his thought. . .

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.
Letter to John Lothrop Motley

His [Coleridge's] genius at that time had angelic wings, and fed on manna. He talked on for ever; and you wished him to talk on for ever. His thoughts did not seem to come with labour and effort; but as if borne on the gusts of genius, and as if the wings of his imagination lifted him from off his feet. His voice rolled on the ear like the pealing organ, and its sound alone was the music of thought. His mind was clothed with wings; and raised on them, he lifted philosophy to heaven. In his descriptions, you then saw the progress of human happiness and liberty in bright and never-ending succession, like the steps of Jacob's ladder, with airy shapes ascending and descending, and with the voice of God at the top of the ladder. And shall I, who heard him then, listen to him now? Not I!. . . That spell is broke; that time is gone forever; that voice is heard no more: but still the recollection comes rushing by with thoughts of long-past years, and rings in my ears with never-dying sound.

William Hazlitt
Lectures on the English Poets (1818)

WORDSWORTH PURRS. He talks in a manner very peculiar. As for duration, it is from the rising up of the sun to the going down of the same. As for quality, a sort of thinking aloud, a perpetual purring of satisfaction. He murmurs like a tree in the breeze; as softly and as incessantly; it seems as natural to him to talk as to breathe. He is by nature audible, as well as visible, and goes on thus uttering his being just as a fountain continues to flow, or a star to shine. In his discourse I was at first principally struck by the extraordinary purity of his language, and the absolute perfection of his sentences; but by degrees I came to find a great charm in observing the exquisite balance of his mind, and the train of associations in which his thoughts followed each other. He does not put forward thoughts like those of Coleridge which astonished his hearers by their depth or vastness, but you gradually discover that there is a sort of inspiration in the mode in which his thoughts flow out of each other, and connect themselves with outward things. He is the voice and Nature the instrument; and they always keep in perfect tune.

Aubrey de Vere
Letter to his sister
25 June 1841

Lady Cynthia Asquith captures her friend, D.H. Lawrence.

5 June 1915

Lawrence's voice, with its layers of harshness and softness, is very interesting - every inch of his body talks with his tongue, and vividly too. I love his blend of earnestness and delicious whimsicality - humour and anger - great power of resentment. Generally these two, humour and resentment, are incompatible - with him they are formidable allies.

Diaries, 1915-1918

And here is Harold Nicolson's lightly fictionalized reminiscence of Lord Curzon's conversational flow:

> He sank back, sipped at a brandy-and-soda, sighed deeply, and then embarked on a narrative of the Vevey conference.
>
> Ah, those Curzonian dissertations! No small thing has passed from my life now they are silenced. As if some stately procession proceeding orderly through Arcs de Triomphe along a straight wide avenue: outriders, escorts, bands; the perfection of accoutrements, the precise marshalling of detail, the sense of conscious continuity, the sense of absolute control. The voice rising at moments in almost histrionic scorn, or dropping at moments into a hush of sudden emotion; and then a flash of March sunshine, a sudden dart of eighteenth-century humour, a pause while his wide shoulders rose and fell in rich amusement. And all this under a cloud of exhaustion, under a cloud of persistent pain.
>
> Some People (1927)

In Lincoln (1984), Gore Vidal notes that Secretary of the Treasury (later Chief Justice) Salmon P. Chase tried to compose his speeches without S's to compensate for his lisp. Edmund Morris, in The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt (1979), reveals that T.R. used a number of effects, including especially the plosive initial P, to overcome his weak vocal delivery. Morris offers this snatch of T.R.'s 5 February 1884 speech on the New York mayoralty bill by way of illustration:

> I will ask the particular attention of the House to this bill. It simply proposes that the Mayor of the City of New York shall have absolute power in making appointments . . . At present we have this curious condition of affairs - the Mayor possessing the nominal power and two or three outside men possessing the real power. I propose to put the power in the hands of the men the people elect. At present the power is in the hands of one or two men whom the people did not elect.

This description of Chief Justice John Marshall's talk, from G.B. Cheever's American Commonplace Book (1828), describes the progress of Marshall's thought and argument.

> The audiences were never permitted to pause for a moment. There is no stopping to weave garlands of flowers to be hung in festoons around a favourite argument. On the contrary, every sentence is progressive; every idea sheds new light on the subject; the listener is kept perpetually in that sweetly pleasurable vibration, with which the mind of man always receives new truths; the dawn advances in easy but unremitting pace; the subject opens gradually on the view; until, rising in high relief in all its native colours and proportions, the argument is consummated by the conviction of the delighted hearer.
>
> William Wirt

Wirt (1772-1834) was a distinguished lawyer who became Attorney General of the United States. He was also the author of the popular Letters of the British Spy (1803) which were contemporary observations of an "English traveller" on Virginian society.

Polished manners and correct behavior were a matter of great importance in 18th century France, but the manner of expressing oneself was more important still. A felicitous phrase, and even an exclamation, uttered at the right moment, and conveying far more than it seemed, could make the reputation of a wit. Talleyrand's first appearance in society as a young man was crowned with success.

> My cold manners and apparent reserve, had induced some persons to say I was witty. Madame de Gramont, who did not like the reputations which she had not made herself, was of service to me by seeking to embarrass me, at the time I first went into society. I was supping for the first time at Auteuil at Madame de Boufflers, and was seated at one end of the table, hardly speaking to my neighbour. Madame de Gramont, in a loud, harsh voice, asked me, calling me by my name, what had so much struck me on entering the drawing-room, whither I followed her, to say: "Ah! ah!" "Your grace," I replied, "did not exactly hear what I said; my words were not 'Ah! ah!' but 'Oh! oh!'" That wretched reply caused general hilarity; I continued to sup, and did not say another word. On leaving the table, a few persons came up to me, and I received for the following days several invitations which enabled me to make the acquaintance of the persons whom I was most anxious to meet.
>
> Memoirs (1891)

Isaac D'Israeli (Curiosities of Literature, 1840) noted that many men of genius were either silent or deficient in conversation. His list included Addison, Corneille, Descartes, Dryden, La Bruyère and Virgil.

Julian Green, the American writer who became a member of the French Academy, gives us a picture of Jean Cocteau in conversational flight.

Cocteau was standing in the middle of his room, a small, spare man with almost incredibly bright eyes and a shock of ink-black hair which made his face look dead white. He walked up to me with both hands stretched out and immediately began talking. What he said I do not remember, but the words he used were like the words of a language I had never heard before and yet understood perfectly. They were the words which we uttered every day unthinkingly whereas Cocteau seemed to give them a new meaning; trite phrases became beautiful and rare because of the unexpected way in which he placed them in sentences; a poor, commonplace expression suddenly acquired lustre and the freshness it had known in its youth. Cocteau's talk was a series of surprises which delighted the mind and kept it in constant expectation of greater pleasures. It was like the speech of an enchanter, one of its effects being to make the listener feel that he was suddenly thinking faster than he had ever thought in his life, and that he was mentally being taken on a journey in a strange new world. As I write this, I realize how woefully inadequate my words must sound in their efforts to describe what escapes description; it is like trying to convey an idea of the flight of a bird to a blind man. Cocteau told a story in three sentences, and made it so vivid that years could never efface it from one's memory. Thoughts and feelings almost invariably suggested images to him, similes which no one had ever dreamed of, many of them of a surpassing beauty which made one regret that every word he said could not be taken down. One of the ways he most often began a sentence was: 'It is like . . .' ('C'est comme . . .') followed by delightfully fanciful comparisons which left one breathless; he would then thrust his head lightly to one side, like a bird, as if he were listening for an answer which could never come, and say: 'Quoi?' *Quoi* did not mean that he expected you to reply--indeed, what could one reply? To listen and to hope for more was all one would have thought of doing

Memories of Happy Days (1942)

The Cocteau performance included a good deal of imitation and movement, as described by Paul Bowles, the late American writer and musicologist, in an April 1931 letter to a friend.

> One of the first things I did here {in Paris} was meet Jean Cocteau, and to go the following day to his house for tea. He rushed about the room with great speed for two hours and never sat down once. Now he pretended he was an orangoutang, next an usher at the Paramount Theatre, and finally he held a dialogue between an aged grandfather and his young grandson which was sidesplitting. I think never have I seen anyone like him in my life.

Textual Considerations

British Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston once said:

Only three people have ever understood the Schleswig-Holstein question: The Prince Consort, who is dead, a German professor who has gone mad, and myself - and I have completely forgotten about it.

From the Spring 1988 founding issue of the Key West Review:

Instructions to Authors Planning Submissions

No manuscripts will be read during the months of June, July, August, or September.

Jorge Luis Borges' story, "The Library of Babel", opens with an unusual parenthesis. Just consider the realm of speculation into which the punctuation leads the reader. A sort of verbal strip tease, it hints at something beyond our imagination which invites the mind to wander.

The Universe (which others call the Library) is composed of an indefinite and perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries..."

Stendahl's economy of style and miraculous self-control achieved the highest artistic effect. Giuseppe di Lampedusa noticed this semi-colon in <u>*The Red and The Black*</u> *which (he said) summarized an entire night of love.*

La vertu de Julien fut égale à son bonheur; il faut que je descende par l'échelle dit-il à Mathilde, quand il vit l'aube de jour paraître.

(The courage of Julien was equal to his happiness; "I must climb back down the ladder," said he, when he saw the dawn breaking.)

Hannah More, the evangelist, in a letter to her sister of 31 December 1782, quotes her friend, Capability Brown, as he describes his art during a tour of Hampton Court.

Now THERE (pointing a finger), I make a comma, and pointing to another spot where a more decided turn is proper, I make a colon; at another point (where an interruption is desireable to break the view) a parenthesis - now a stop, and then I begin another subject.

Austin Dobson, the epigrammist, once remarked to Henry James when the latter said he had been lost in the Maze at Hampton Court:

I am surprized at that. I should have thought you would have felt that you were in the middle of one of your sentences.

Harold J. Laski
Letter to Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.
1 December 1925

For all of us who endure typographical errors, it is comforting to know that one of the first books printed in England contained a howler of historical magnitude.

> The first book printed in Oxford, probably by Theodoric Rood from Cologne, purporting to be an exposition of the Apostle's Creed by St. Jerome, had been dated 1468 - some nine years before Caxton began printing in London. Bibliographers, with one notable exception, were subsequently to conclude that the date was a mistake for 1478, an X having dropped out of the Roman numeral.
>
> Henry Carter
> A History of the Oxford University Press (1975)

One wonders if Rood was not perhaps seizing an opportunity of appearing to have printed the first book in England, and earning himself a place in history. The first book printed in England by William Caxton, in 1477, was The Dictes or Sayengis of the Philosophres. It is not clear which bibliographer took exception to the conclusion.

It is comforting to know that even Charles Dickens felt a pang of restlessness when confronted with a blank page. Dickens shares his torment with Miss Angela Burdett Coutts in a letter of 8 May 1855.

> I am in a state of restlessness impossible to be described - impossible to be imagined - wearing and tearing to be experienced. I sit down of a morning, with all kinds of notes for my new book (for which by the bye, I think I have a capital name) - resolve to begin - get up, and go out, and walk a dozen miles - sit down again next morning - get up and go down a railroad - come back again, and register a vow to go out of town instantly, and begin at the feet of the Pyrenees - sit down again - get up and walk about my room all day - wander about London till midnight - make engagements and am too distraught to hear speeches - pleaded Influenza at the last moment - and am at present going through the whole routine, over and over and over again.

Dickens is wrestling with the first chapters of Little Dorrit. I noticed this letter on exhibition at the Morgan Library in New York City.

From Samuel Pepys' Diary:

16 April 1661

So soon as word was brought me that Mr. Coventry was come with the barge to the Tower, I went to him and find him reading of the psalmes in short-hand (which he is now busy about); and had good sport about the long marks that are made there for sentences in Divinity, which he is never like to make.

The footnote in Latham and Matthews' 1983 edition of the Diary says that the use of special signs was lavish in the Jeremiah Rich psalter which Coventry would have been reading and that wavy lines represented "the devills feare and tremble".

William Coventry, later knighted, was at the time Secretary to the Duke of York and M.P. for Greater Yarmouth. He was Navy Commissioner from 1662 - 1667 and so a friend of Pepys.

Some authors cannot resist the urge to use their "blurb" to make a point. Here are two rather crusty ones:

> Jean Gimpel is the son of the well-known art dealer René Gimpel and nephew of the incomparable Duveen. Since 1948 he has not permitted a work of art to enter his house.
>
> The Cult of Art (1968)

> Jon Winokur, the editor of Writers on Writing, lives and writes in Pacific Palisades, California. He's been in a bad mood since 1971.
>
> The Portable Curmudgeon (1987)

Pope thought the simile at line 687 in his translation of the Iliad was second to none in all of Homer. "It is the most beautiful Nightpiece that can be found in poetry. He presents you with a Prospect of the Heavens, the Seas, and the Earth: The Stars shine, the Air is serene, the World enlighten'd and the Moon mounted in Glory."

The Troops exulting sate in order round,
And beaming Fires illumin'd all the Ground.
As when the Moon, refulgent Lamp of Night!
O'er Heav'ns clear Azure spreads her sacred Light,
When not a Breath disturbs the deep Serene;
And not a Cloud o'ercasts the solemn Scene;
Around her Throne the vivid Planets roll,
And Stars unnumber'd gild the glowing Pole,
O'er the dark Trees a yellower Verdure shed,
And tip with Silver ev'ry Mountain's Head;
Then shine the Vales, the Rocks in Prospect rise,
A Flood of Glory bursts from all the Skies:
The conscious Swains, rejoicing in the Sight,
Eye the blue Vault, and bless the useful Light.

Alexander Pope
Iliad, Book VIII (1715-1720)

Night has put an end to battle. Hector has given orders to the Trojans to keep watch all night in camp to prevent the Greeks from reembarking and escaping by flight.

W.C. Green (The Similes of Homer's Iliad, 1877) did not agree, or at least he did not include Pope's favorite amongst his choices of Homeric similes.

Edith Wharton was also a master of the simile:

The use of dialogue in fiction seems to be one of the few things about which a fairly definite rule may be laid down. It should be reserved for the culminating moments, and regarded as the spray into which the great wave of narrative breaks in curving toward the watcher on the shore. This lifting and scattering of the wave, the coruscation of the spray, even the mere material sight of the page broken into short, uneven paragraphs, all help to reinforce the contrast between such climaxes and the smooth effaced gliding of the narrative intervals; and the contrast enhances that sense of the passage of time for the producing of which the writer has to depend on his intervening narration. Thus the sparing use of dialogue not only serves to emphasize the crises of the tale but to give it as a whole a greater effect of continuous development.

Edith Wharton
The Writing of Fiction (1925)

A Riddle

What is the difference between a model woman and a woman model?

The one is a bare possibility, the other is a naked fact.

Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff
Notes From A Diary, 1896-1901

I keep adding to my collection of eponymous names.

Bourdalou: Chamberpot. Named after an eloquent French 17th century Jesuit preacher, Pere Louis Bourdaloue (1632-1704), whose sermons drew great crowds and were so long-winded that ladies brought such vessels to church for use under their skirts in case of need.

Bristol: A visiting card or the name of a number of first class hotels in Europe. Named after Frederick Hervey, Bishop of Derry, fourth Earl of Bristol (1730-1803). So widely famed was the Bishop as a traveller and connoisseur of good things that Lord Bristol's hotel came to be the best known everywhere.

Léotard: Jules Léotard (1830-1870), a Frenchman first trained as a lawyer, invented the flying trapeze in 1859. He was the subject of the music hall song, "The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze." The tight fitting garment he wore has passed with his name into gymnastic language.

Maverick: An island in Boston harbor still carries the name of this eccentric Devon family of early settlers who had trouble with Puritan authority and moved away. By the nineteenth century the Mavericks had found their way out west where their name was given to range cattle that bore no man's brand and became a synonym in American speech for independent eccentricity.

In conversation with John Payne Collier on 20 October 1811, Samuel Coleridge named this sentence from John Milton as one of the most remarkable in the English language.

> For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them.

Areopagitica (1644)

For emphasis Laurence Olivier, that brilliant actor of our time, would sometimes draw his audience's attention to a particular line. In one instance he even changed the punctuation of a Shakespearian phrase in order to do so. This was in "Twelfth Night", Act II, Scene III where, under his interpretation:

My Masters, are you mad? or what are you?

became:

My Masters, are you mad or what? Are you?

The complete text of Malvolio's speech is:

My Masters, are you mad? or what are you? Have you no wit, manners, nor honesty but to gabble like tinkers at this time of night? Do ye make an alehouse of my Lady's house, that ye squeak out your coziers' catches without any mitigation or remorse of voice? Is there no respect of place, persons, nor time in you?

Boon that it has become, computerization has done away with one bookish pleasure - the library check out card giving the names of previous readers and the dates they read the book. S.M. Ulam had an unusual experience when he was preparing to join the Manhattan Project:

> Finally I learned that we were going to New Mexico, to a place not far from Santa Fe. Never having heard about New Mexico, I went to the library and borrowed the Federal Writers' Project Guide to New Mexico. At the back of the book, on the slip of paper on which borrowers signed their names, I read the names of Joan Hinton, David Frisch, Joseph McKibben, and all the other people [University of Chicago scientists] who had been mysteriously disappearing to hush-hush war jobs without saying where.
>
> S.M. Ulam
> Adventures of a Mathematician (1976)

The best known record in this field is the Bristol Library register, which contains a listing of the reading of Coleridge and Southey over many years. In November 1795, Coleridge, on taking out a volume of Apuleius, enthusiastically scrawled in the record, in lieu of the date, news of a naval victory:

> 9 Dutch ships taken, with 3000 troops. Bravo.

Prescription

SHAMPOO: New England rum, constantly used to wash the hair, keeps it very clean, and free from disease, and promotes its growth a great deal better than macassar oil. Brandy is very strengthening to the roots of the hair; but it has a hot, drying tendency that New England rum has not.

Lydia Maria Frances Child
The American Frugal Housewife (1836)

Two formulas, once fashionable, for closing letters to ladies in Spain:

QBSM

Que Besa Su Mano (Who kisses your hand)

QBSP

Que Besa Su Pies (Who kisses your feet)

Herricks in fiction are so rare (I have discovered only six) that I am grateful for the few I find. Here is Nicholas, the schoolmaster in Ivy Compton-Burnett's Pastors and Masters (1925).

"How long will it take you actually to write it, Herrick?" said Bumpus.

"I have it this time," said Herrick. "I have been letting it grow in my head. Because of course in a way it has been there for some time. It is as good as written down. It was the form of it that flashed on me. I do things much in my head, as you know."

"Oh, Nicholas, I didn't know. I do admire you," said Emily.

"I think I have found myself at last," said Herrick. "I think that, God willing, I shall have done my little bit for my generation, done what every man ought to do, before he dies."

One For The Road

A noted American historian, author of The Course of Empire, took the time to write a small volume on the cocktail. He finishes here, just in time for dinner.

> Certainly I'll have another one. The water of life was given to us to make us see for a while that we are more nearly men and women, more nearly kind and gentle and generous, pleasanter and stronger, than without its vision there is any evidence we are. It is the healer, the weaver of forgiveness and reconciliation, the justifier of us to ourselves and one another. One more, and then with a spirit made whole again in a cleansed world, to dinner.
>
> Bernard DeVoto
> The Hour (1948)

Bibliographical Note

The commonplace book deserves to be better known, especially at a time when there is a public need and demand for revival of the Western literary canon in America. The Oxford Companion to English Literature contains no reference to this literary deposit, major libraries have no catalogue entry for it, historical and critical commentary on the subject is hard to come by. Yet, tucked away in scholarly publications, lies the rich history of a tradition which dates to Roman times.

Sir Thomas Browne, John Milton, John Locke and Robert Herrick kept commonplace books. Bishop Berkeley, Thomas Jefferson and Samuel Coleridge kept them. Lord Byron, Robert Southey, Oscar Wilde and many other writers and notable people felt a need for them. Edith Wharton, E.M. Forster and W.H. Auden relied on them. The list goes on and on. Some have been published but most remain in manuscript form in rare book libraries or historical societies.

Ruth Mohl's John Milton and His Commonplace Book (1969) gives a comprehensive review of the classical origin of the genre. The term commonplace derives from Aristotle's analysis of the topos koinos which formed the basis of his discovery of deductive reasoning. He tried to catalogue all knowledge under a number of topics (or topoi in Greek). In ancient Rome Cicero, notably, saw the commonplace as being useful in collecting illustrative examples for use in the peroration of speeches. Erasmus revived the tradition in the 16th century and keeping a commonplace book became a widespread custom in the education and what is now called self-fashioning of the Renaissance. Sister Joan Marie Lechner's Renaissance Concepts of Commonplaces (1962) opens the door to a rich history of the form.

More recently John D. Lyons' Exemplum, The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy (1989), charting a course between the commonplace and its related forms such as adages, maxims and sententiae, underlines the importance of the rhetorical exemplum, or short narrative used to illustrate a moral point and intended to communicate commonly held values and transmit culture. The exemplum also came to be concerned with narration (losing its Aristotelian sense of paradigm) mostly in the art of oratory or preaching at first. Lyons argues that the exemplum could allow the past not only to be alluded to but actually to be resuscitated through individual observance of the recommended rules of contact. Reminding oneself of the appropriate models of behavior served also to brighten, expand and enrich discourse.

Compilation of exempla from renowned authors underlay the educational experience of the elite through the 17th century and established a practice that many continued on into later life. But individual commonplace books branched off into different areas and novel forms. By at least 1680 albums designed as commonplace books were sold in London for those who wished to follow the Lockean method of cataloging their reading by topic. Those preferring a more open-ended form simply filled in an empty volume as the occasion arose. Poetry is a feature of surviving 17th century commonplace books, anecdotes and light verse of 18th century ones. Nineteenth century compilers tended to collect a wider anthology, although many different forms exist. Until the publication of the diaries of Evelyn and Pepys in the early 19th century, literary ephemera, or diaries, journals and letters, were not regarded as products for publication although they formed an important part of the literary estate of major writers. The publication of Southey's extensive commonplace book, starting in 1850, undoubtedly stimulated interest in the practice and influenced the form commonplace books could take thereafter.

The commonplace book of a major writer can be something more than a personal anthology. The very sequence of his or her reading, thoughts or literary scraps can be revealing in the overall context of the oeuvre. The private commonplace book of an unknown reader has to meet a different set of tests before publication. Robert Graves and Laura Riding, in Against Anthologies, made a provocative broadside attack against anthologies of poetry. Paul Fussell, in Abroad (1980), argues that anomalous juxtaposition in anthologies destroys narrative sequence and creates a new, fractured reality. The Renaissance tradition and intent were different. Lyons holds that in the vast Renaissance experience, humanists collected exempla in isolation from their context and placed them into a new and more visible setting for greater rhetorical effect. Lawrence Rosenwald, in Emerson and the Art of the Diary (1988), maintains that there can be a design to the journal greater than the vagaries of a work of chance and that it has a function in creating a conversational space between philosophers and friends. Discrimination about literary effort emerges from the challenge of different points of view.

From my perspective there are several considerations for judging the value of a commonplace book today. It should establish a consistent literary or spiritual landscape for the author. It should reach for some literary unity. It should contain some internal argument about the book itself. A contemporary tone is also necessary. Sententious sayings are no longer in fashion to take just one example. It seems rather that the commonplace book of our day is playful in tone and leisured in manner albeit with a serious purpose. Most literature having been anthologized already, there must be a freshness or a "twist" to the selections. I would also argue for an element of "instruction" to retain some flavor of the Renaissance exemplum.

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Addison, Joseph 6
Ashmole, Elias 76
Asquith, Lady Cynthia 120
Asser, Bishop of Sherborne 10
Augustine, St. 90
Austen, Jane 9, 69

Beyle, Henri (Stendahl) 131
Borges, Jorge Luis 131
Boswell, James 65
Bourrienne, Louis Antoine Fauvelet de 72
Bowles, Paul 126
Brodrick, William 60
Browne, Sir Thomas 54
Bumpo, Imai Shokusajin 8

Carter, Henry 133
Chamworth, Lady 104
Child, Lydia 144
Clark, Ronald 82
Cole, Thomas 108
Cole, William 75
Combe, William 19
Compton-Burnett, Ivy 146
Crosby, Caresse 30
Cunningham, Allan 16
Curzon, Robert 78

Degas, Edgar 15
Devoto, Bernard 149
Dickens, Charles 43, 106, 107, 134
Dobson, Austin 132
Douglas, Norman 78
Dromore, Bishop of 11
Duff, Sir Mountstuart Grant 139
Dwight, Timothy 45

Espy, John 96

Finbert, Elian 49
Fisher, M.F.K. 59
French, Benjamin Brown 110
Fuller, Thomas 43

Gimpel, Jean 136
Green, Julian 125
Griscom, Lloyd 93
Grocer, Thomas 4

Halberstam, David 97
Halverson, Rev. Richard 83
Haydon, Benjamin Robert 22, 67
Hardy, Thomas 73
Hassall, Christopher 96
Hazlitt, William 118
Hoare, Philip 57
Holmes, Oliver Wendell, Jr. 52, 117
Homer 137
Huxley, Gervas 74

Irvine, Wilson Henry 25
Irving, Washington 109

Jewett, Sarah Orne 111

Keay, John 61

Laski, Harold 132
L'Esparbès, Madame de 81
Leymarie, Jean 26
Lichtenberg, Georg Christoph 5
Lindley, Sir Francis 38

Macaulay, Lord 70
Madan, Geoffrey 4
Malinowski, Bronislaw 95
Mander, Carel van 17
Marmontel, Jean-François 116
Marsh, Edward 96
Milnes, Richard Moncton 78
Milton, John 141

More, Hannah 132

Needham, Joseph 7
Nichols, Beverley 84
Nicolson, Harold 121

Olivier, Sir Laurence 142

Palmerston, Henry, Viscount 129
Parkman, Francis 71
Pepys, Samuel 135
Pope, Alexander 56, 105, 137
Potter, Steven 99
Powell, Anthony 23
Prichard, Matthew 29
Psalmanazar, George 80
Pückler-Muskau, Prince Hermann 79

Rich, Lady Frances 81
Roosevelt, Theodore 122
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 116

Sanford, Colonel George 77
Santayana, George 41
Sewall, Samuel 91
Shakespeare, William 142
Sitwell, Osbert 112, 115
Smith, Corinna 24
Sontag, Susan 47
Southey, Robert 97
Sperling, Otto 18
Stanley, Fortune 42
Stark, Freya 12
Stendahl (See Beyle)

Talleyrand, Charles Maurice, 124
Prince de
Taylor, Jeremy 3
Thornbury, Walter 20, 21, 92
Trollope, Anthony 68, 81, 89
Turberville, George 103

Ulam, S.M. 143

Victor, Titus, Pomponious 51
Vere, Aubrey de 119
Voltaire (Francois Marie Arouet)

Wharton, Edith 138
White, Gilbert 74
Winokur, Jon 136
Winthrop, John 46
Wirt, William 123
Wodehouse, P.G. 98
Woolf, Leonard 94

Yarmolinsky, Avrahm 53

Alfred, King 10
Ambiguous pronunciation 115
Aphorisms 5
Auchincloss, Louis 85

Baboons, Ethiopian 85
Baseball 24, 99
Bird song 48
Blurbs 136
Braganza, Catherine of 104
Breughel, Pieter, the Elder 17
Brown, Lancelot "Capability" 132
Byron, George Gordon, Lord 93

Catalogues 57
Census 45
Charades 93
Christmas carols 29, 31
Church ritual 34
Cocktails 149
Cocteau, Jean 125
Codes 50
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor 143
Complexity 129
Concordances 56
Corot, Jean-Baptiste-Camille 26
Counting games 97
Court judgments 60
Cricket 95
Croquet 94

Dandies 79
Diary entries 74-76, 135
Dislikes 73
D'Orsay, Count 22

Einstein, Alfred 82
Epitaph 59
Eponymous names 140
Exaggeration 72
Exclamation 124

Forgery 70
Four letter words 44

Gainsborough, Sir Thomas 16
Glorious death 71, 72
Golf 96
Grammar of landscape 132
Guide books 58

Holmes, Oliver Wendell, Jr. 52, 117

Inadvertencies 43
Inauspicious beginning 6
Independency 65
Index 42
Invocation 83
Irreverence 68

James, Henry 132

Last words 77
Letters of dismissal 81
Lampedusa, Giuseppe di 131
Liars 80
Library cards 143
Lisping 122
Literary journals 9

Marital discussion 69
Matutinal greetings 4
Meanspiritedness 73
Michelangelo Buonarotti 23
Monkeys 84

Necessities 46, 47
Newman, Cardinal 115
Nichols, John 75
Nightpiece 137

Olivier, Sir Laurence 142

Packing lists 78
Painting in Heaven 26
Parenthesis 131
Parody 31, 33, 38
Parrots 49
Perfidy 70
Persian proverb 12
Perverse delight 82
Philip, King of Macedon 4
Pictoresque 19
Prefaces 7
Prescription 144
Propaganda 36
Punctuation 131

Riddle 139
Rossini, Gioacchino 112
Roulette 29
Rubens, Peter Paul 18

Sargent, John Singer 24
Schleswig-Holstein question 129
Semi-colon 131
Sermons 96
Similes 137, 138
Snowmen 23
Spanish letter closings 145
Supplication 51

Talk:
- Bloomsbury 115
- Cocteau, Jean 125, 126
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor 118
- Curzon, George Nathaniel, Lord 121
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo 117
- Lawrence, D.H. 120
- Luxembourg, Madame de 116
- Marshall, John 123
- Newman, Joseph, Cardinal 115
- Parisian salons 116
- Roosevelt, Theodore 122
- Talleyrand, Charles Maurice, Prince de 124

Wordsworth, William 11

Tea 74
Turner, J.M.W. 20, 21, 92
Typographical errors 133

Wavy lines 135
Wellington's horse 22
Wolfe, General James 71
Worcestershire sauce 78
Writer's block 134

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GEORGE GARDNER HERRICK is a well known author of commonplace books and a student of their literature. He lives in Maine and in Washington, D.C.

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